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New York

Chairman: Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation's congratulations to you on your election, Sir, to the important post of Chairman of the First Committee are not just a traditional tribute or a demonstration of courtesy. We welcome you as a high-ranking official, a professional of established authority and a representative of Belarus, a country with which Russia maintains particularly close relations and which is making a great contribution to international security and disarmament. Belarus's contribution is rightfully being singled out by many delegations at the current session of the General Assembly.

You can count on the full cooperation of the Russian delegation in carrying out your difficult task. We are convinced that the positive interaction of delegations and the methodical work of the First Committee's Bureau will help you carry it out with success.

Although humankind is going through a very trying time, a real transition is being made from bloc confrontation to multipolarity, economic interdependence and the democratization of international relations. Although this trend is not universal, and although it can sometimes be a bumpy ride along Nevsky Prospekt, as we say, current developments are especially important for the fruitful work of the First Committee in building up the United Nations multilateral potential and gradually strengthening security and developing the disarmament process.

One of the pivotal components of the current strategy must by a programme of disarmament, security and stability geared towards the twenty-first century. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation play an important role in such a strategy.

We are willing to make systematic and consistent efforts, together with all other nuclear-weapon States, to reduce nuclear weapons at the global level with the ultimate aim of eliminating this type of weapon, and we are willing to cooperate with all States in achieving general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was an historic landmark. We agree with the Secretary-General's appraisal of the instrument and are convinced, first, that this document will free humankind forever from the threat of nuclear explosions in any environment; secondly, that it makes an effective contribution to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and provides a way for Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to implement the relevant decision of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT; thirdly, that it is a comprehensive ban without threshold on all nuclear explosions and will surely and effectively obstruct the qualitative improvement in nuclear charges; and fourthly, that it will be a starting point and effective catalyst to the negotiation process with a view to further reducing nuclear weapons until they are ultimately eliminated.

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We note with satisfaction that more than 120 States have already signed the CTBT. We hope that the Treaty will be signed by all countries, including those with the capacity to develop nuclear weapons and whose signature is of major importance, particularly in ensuring the Treaty's entry into force. Universal adherence to the Treaty will forever spare humankind from another nuclear explosion.

We fully agree with the view expressed here by many delegations that it is intolerable that the CTBT should be approached from a position of "all or nothing".

The CTBT relates specifically to a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing. It is not an agreement to ban the development and improvement of nuclear weapons, which would have given it a different scope and required a different verification system. It is not correct, therefore, to expect the CTBT to do the work of another treaty on which there has been no negotiation.

I would like to draw the attention of those who oppose the Treaty to the fact that it will objectively promote a gradual transition to nuclear disarmament on a multilateral basis. The proposal put forward by Russia's President, Boris Yeltsin, to conclude a treaty on nuclear security and stability with the participation of all nuclear Powers pursues the same goal. We once again call upon the States concerned to start an exchange of views on this issue.

We would also remind the Committee of our proposal aimed at ensuring that nuclear arsenals are deployed only in the territory of the corresponding nuclear Powers. We support the initiative of Belarus along this line and share the opinion expressed by the representative of Mexico on the importance of implementing it as soon as possible. In this connection, we should note that all nuclear weapons deployed in the territory of Ukraine have this year been completely withdrawn and taken to the Russian Federation to be destroyed. We also note the statement made here that a similar withdrawal from Belarus would be completed in the near future.

Russia highly appreciates the consensus decision taken last year at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to make the Treaty permanent. This decision, along with the conclusion of the CTBT, strongly consolidates the foundations of international stability and security and creates better prospects for us successfully to move forward in the area of disarmament.

Russia believes that it is time to do our utmost to hold a successful first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference scheduled for the year 2000.

Russia has vigorously supported and continues to support the fruitful activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency in the areas of non-proliferation and the development of international cooperation in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

If we are to strengthen the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we must also find a reliable way of preventing the illicit traffic of fissile material. The Moscow Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security has made a major contribution to solving this problem. United Nations Member States should be involved in implementing the Moscow Summit agreements.

One of these agreements concerns a ban on dumping radioactive waste at sea. We are willing to support a consensus draft resolution on this issue, which should, of course, refer to the role of the Moscow Summit in arriving at a consensus on the substance of the matter.

We are sure that the potential of the Conference on Disarmament, which was so clearly confirmed by the preparation of the CTBT, can and should be used intensively in the interests of taking further practical steps towards disarmament.

In our view, it would be of major importance if the Conference on Disarmament were to launch comprehensive negotiations on the elaboration of a multilateral convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

It is common knowledge that Russia has already stopped the production of weapons-grade uranium. The national programme to stop the production of weapons-grade plutonium is to be implemented by 1998.

We favour the inclusion of nuclear disarmament as a separate item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. We are ready to consider the possibility of establishing various organizational frameworks to discuss the issue, including an appropriate ad hoc committee for negotiations on a ban of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and a possible future examination of the necessary approach and conditions for talks on nuclear disarmament, their stages, dates, participants and so forth.

The reduction of nuclear weapons is an extremely complex and multidimensional process and we would not claim that we can now see all that is involved in fine detail nor that we are in a position to make up a respective timetable or establish an implementation time-frame. In our opinion, this simply confirms the need to initiate a broad dialogue on the whole spectrum of problems in the area. It is especially important to identify the conditions that have to be met if we are to make progress.

In particular, we clearly understand that the emerging possibility, for example, of tactical nuclear weapons and sophisticated conventional arms systems being deployed near our borders in the event of North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion to the East would change the entire strategic situation, create new conditions and force us to review our approach to arms limitation and disarmament.

The Treaty between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems is of particular importance to the process of nuclear disarmament, a key element of strategic stability and a condition for strategic offensive arms reductions. In this connection, we note with satisfaction that Russia and the United States, with the participation of Belarus, Kazakstan and Ukraine, are pursuing negotiations on the elaboration of agreements on the delimitation of strategic and non-strategic anti-ballistic missiles. The first stage of these negotiations on non-strategic low-velocity anti-ballistic missile systems has been successfully completed. The second stage of negotiations on the delimitation of non-strategic high-velocity anti-ballistic missile systems is under way. The solution of this problem will make an important contribution to the creation of conditions for further reductions of strategic offensive arms against the backdrop of the consolidation of strategic stability and international security.

We are convinced that creating internationally-recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world helps to strengthen peace and security at the global and regional levels and contributes to narrowing the geographical area of nuclear preparations, thus consolidating the non-proliferation regime. It is important that the establishment of such zones in no way violate the generally accepted principle of the full freedom to navigate.

In its willingness to contribute to the effort of African States to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, the Russian Federation decided to sign Protocols I and II to the relevant Treaty signed in Cairo on 11 April 1996. We are also pleased to note that all nuclear-weapon States have subscribed this year to the respective Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga. In our view, it is important that the existing zones set a good example for achieving similar agreements for the Middle East and South Asia.

Given the importance of Security Council resolution 984 (1995), the statements the five nuclear Powers made at its adoption and the need stressed at the NPT Review and Extension Conference to consider further measures for providing the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT with assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, we believe that such measures could result in the drafting of a legally-binding international instrument. It seems that the time has come to reestablish the Ad Hoc Committee dealing with this issue at the Conference on Disarmament.

As I conclude this statement on our position on nuclear issues, I cannot help noting that, in its Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which has been referred to by many delegations, the International Court of Justice did not come to the conclusion that there was any prohibition in international law of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

In a consistent stand in support of arms control, disarmament and an ultimate ban on all types of weapons of mass destruction, we believe that the respective limitations and prohibitions should be introduced simultaneously with the creation of objective conditions enjoying the general support of the community of States concerned.

We do not wish to dramatize the situation involving the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, although, of course, what happened in September may affect the approach taken by legislatures in other countries to the ratification of this important Convention. We cannot simply confine ourselves to appeals for ratification of the Convention; a real effort will be needed, including at the Hague negotiations, to remove the well-known concerns of the States regarding one aspect of the Convention or other. As far as Russia is concerned, we will do our utmost to resolve the problems so that the Federal Assembly can ratify the Convention.

Russia supports proposals aimed at consolidating the regime of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

by creating a verification mechanism. We are in favour of encouraging the corresponding negotiations.

At this session, we have witnessed attempts to doctor the balanced results of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which is known to have adopted an amended Protocol II on mines. The proposals for an expeditious ban on mines, accompanied by the setting of specious dates for the completion of negotiations that have not yet started, really look like an attempt to revise these results.

What are the reasons for this? What has changed since 3 May this year, when the Conference capped its work in Geneva with a consensus? We are confident that, in the long run, decisions will be made only on the basis of common agreement, taking into account the positions and legitimate security concerns of all countries and regions, so as to strengthen overall security and confidence.

In our opinion, the international community can now step up its assistance to States in mine clearance as an integral part of the measures on post-conflict settlement and as a component of humanitarian assistance. In this context, the United Nations has an important role to play in coordinating the efforts of States and regional organizations to implement mine-clearance programmes.

The problem of mine clearance in the conflict zones of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, primarily Abkhazia, is particularly acute and urgent. The Trust Fund for Georgia set up by the United Nations Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 937 (1994) focuses on the solution to this problem.

Russia welcomes the outcome of the May Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). An acceptable solution was found on flank areas. What has to be done now is to exploit the flexibility of the agreed document. The bloc approach embodied in this Treaty has long been outdated. It is important to adapt the Treaty to the new political and military realities. This is a prerequisite for consolidating the viability and efficiency of the CFE Treaty in future. To that end, tangible results should be achieved in this endeavour at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Lisbon summit.

We have a principled approach to transparency in armaments. Since 1993, we have been regularly submitting data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Concerning information on military holdings and procurements through national production, we believe this requires further work, particularly within the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the further development of the Register, which is scheduled to meet in 1997.

We are studying the question of convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This would require a consensus on the issues to be taken up at such a session, the framework for realistic decisions to be taken on both issues and the dates on which it should be held. The United Nations Disarmament Commission is in a position to tackle these problems.

In conclusion, I wish to recall that Russia has proposed the convening of a third peace conference in 1999. It appears that the time has come to have a practical discussion of this initiative.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakstan) (*interpretation from Russian*): First, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Kazakstan, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the important post of Chairman of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau. I feel sure that, under your able guidance, we will be able to take mutually acceptable decisions on the important issues before the Committee.

Our delegation has always accorded the greatest attention to the very serious problems that are discussed in the First Committee. I wish to assure you that you can count on the full cooperation of my delegation.

The fifty-first session of the General Assembly is taking place at a particularly important time. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is now open for signature. In connection with this truly historic event, the President of the Republic of Kazakstan, Mr. Nazarbaev, made a special statement that was distributed as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda items 66 and 71. In his declaration, Mr. Nazarbaev stressed that:

> "The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a consequence of the positive changes in the international arena in recent years. Kazakstan pays tribute to the enormous amount of work carried out by many States on the road to the Treaty. We note with satisfaction that our country, too, made its contribution

to the preparation of what is one of the most important agreements of this century." (*A/C.1/51/5, p. 2*)

Five years ago, Kazakstan made an historic choice, as noted in the statement, when it put an end to tests of the most dangerous weapons in the history of mankind. Our Head of State took the unprecedented decision to close the operating Semipalatinsk nuclear-test area. As Party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Kazakstan strictly abides by its provisions and has consistently followed a policy of non-proliferation of other forms of weapons of mass destruction.

Recently, the last launching facilities for nuclear missiles were destroyed on the territory of Kazakstan. We no longer have nuclear weapons on our territory, although until recently we ranked fourth in the world in this area. It was not an easy process, but Kazakstan did benefit from international cooperation. Today there are many questions on the agenda of the international community that, if resolved, will bring us closer to a nuclear-weapon-free world. These questions include verification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a ban on the production of fissile material for military purposes and the prevention of illegal trading in nuclear materials.

The efforts of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency in this area have always been supported by Kazakstan. For example, having closed the nuclear-test area, Kazakstan also destroyed its nuclear infrastructure, signed the CTBT and is pursuing its efforts to implement the provisions of the Treaty. Our Head of State made a statement at the session of the Conference on Disarmament on the international monitoring system in Kazakstan.

In noting the great importance of the opening of the CTBT for signature, Kazakstan cannot assert that nuclear testing is a thing solely of the past. The damage it has wrought on people and the environment has yet to be assessed. It is well known that, over the course of over 40 years, 459 nuclear explosions were conducted in Kazakstan, including 113 tests in the atmosphere. Over half a million people in Kazakstan were exposed to radioactivity. Obviously, enormous efforts will have to be made to undo the consequences of nuclear testing in our country. We think that Kazakstan is right to count on assistance from the world community, primarily from the nuclear Powers.

Kazakstan appreciates the work done by the Conference on Disarmament on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Considering the importance of the Conference, we welcome the decision to expand its membership, and we hope that States that have expressed a desire to participate in the work of that authoritative body will be accepted by the Conference.

The extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was one of last year's outstanding events in the area of strengthening the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, there is a clear need to build on this success and to move ahead towards the lofty goal of complete nuclear disarmament. Next year's first session of the preparatory committee for the Review Conference on the NPT is very important. Much work must be done on the establishment of mechanisms for the effective implementation of the Treaty. Of course, very serious attention must be paid to this work.

Kazakstan's participation in the global non-proliferation process is reflected in what we are doing to develop national mechanisms. This year we adopted a law on expert monitoring, which we view as a contribution to the overall effort to avert the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This is an important area. We have tried to simplify our national activities for effective implementation of instruments in the area of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakstan is currently taking the necessary steps to complete its work in respect of the Conventions on chemical weapons and on biological weapons.

Our delegation is pleased to see the gradual progress in the area of monitoring and reduction of conventional weapons, including those that are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects. In our view, work on prohibiting the use of anti-personnel mines should continue; high priority should be given to this issue. Instability in many parts of the world shows that monitoring the proliferation of conventional weapons must be strengthened as an important tool for ensuring regional security. In this connection, we regard the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a very important component of such monitoring. Kazakstan supports the Register, and has been providing the necessary information to it since 1992.

As a European and Asian State, Kazakstan attaches particular important to questions of regional and subregional security in Europe and in Asia. We note the significant progress that has been made in a number of areas of Europe and Asia — for example, the positive development of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), and the signing of the historic Shanghai Agreement between

Kazakstan, Kyrgyztan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China on military confidence-building measures and border matters. Obviously, much remains to be done in developing and strengthening security and cooperation at the regional level, particularly in Asia.

In this connection, we note that a real contribution in this area could be the convening of a conference on mutual assistance and confidence-building measures in Asia, as proposed by President Nazarbaev in his statement at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. February 1996 marked an important milestone towards this goal, when a meeting was held at the level of deputy heads of the foreign policy departments of more than two dozen Asian States to work on the base documents for such a conference. We are grateful for the support lent by States of Asia and other continents towards holding this conference on mutual assistance and confidence-building measures in Asia.

The results of the consistent efforts of so many States to draft and open for signature the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty create a favourable atmosphere for the work of the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. In working to achieve the lofty goals of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and in safeguarding international security, my colleagues in the First Committee can, as before, count on the constructive cooperation of the delegation of Kazakstan.

Mr. Fostervoll (Norway): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to your important Committee posts.

Before addressing some of the issues on our agenda, permit me to make some observations on the relationship between our two most challenging objectives: nuclear arms control and disarmament on the one hand, and efforts to prevent the proliferation of such weapons on the other. In the view of my Government, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should not be viewed as separate processes. For our non-proliferation efforts to succeed, further concrete progress must be demonstrated towards reducing the political and strategic significance of nuclear weapons. That implies full implementation of existing arms control and disarmament agreements, as well as a political willingness to contemplate further steps. The Norwegian Government has noted with interest the report by the Canberra Commission and considers its proposals and recommendations to be of great value in charting the course ahead.

I would like also to emphasize that by pointing out the interrelationship between arms control and disarmament and non-proliferation, we do not advocate that progress in one area should be made hostage to positive developments in the other. Such an approach would lead to a sterile confrontation. Rather, we should establish a positive linkage. Further progress towards nuclear disarmament will strengthen the perception of the decreasing relevance of nuclear weapons as instruments of national policy, thereby reducing the incentive to acquire such weapons. Or to quote the representative of the United States in his constructive statement yesterday, "The world's nuclear arsenals must keep shrinking" (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, First Committee, 5th meeting, p. 7*).

Secondly, the international disarmament agenda should also encompass what I would call the management of disarmament — that is, the problems relating to the implementation of the nuclear and chemical disarmament processes, including the secure and environmentally safe handling of material from nuclear and chemical weapons scheduled for destruction. These are new issues of great complexity which will become a growing challenge in the years ahead and which call for a more concerted and strengthened international effort. Norway will continue to make an active contribution in this important area.

For the first time since mankind entered the nuclear age, we now have a Treaty banning all nuclear test explosions. The adoption by the General Assembly earlier this fall of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a milestone in the field of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, and it represents a major step towards ending the nuclear arms race. By banning all nuclear testing, the Treaty removes a threat to human health and the environment that has been a cause for serious concern for my Government for most of the past half century.

The CTBT will facilitate the further implementation of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the NPT Review and Extension Conference last year. Norway urges all United Nations Member States that have not already done so to sign the Treaty and to undertake the necessary ratification procedures to make the Treaty enter into force as soon as possible.

Now that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been concluded, it is the view of my Government that all nuclear-weapon States should destroy their nuclear testing facilities, as a logical consequence of

that comprehensive agreement. The French Government has undertaken to close down its testing site on the Mururoa atoll in the Pacific. We welcome that decision. Similar measures should also be implemented by the other nuclear Powers.

Because we see verification and monitoring as indispensable elements in an effective CTBT, Norway has for many years participated actively in the Group of Scientific Experts in Geneva and in the planning and conduct of the Group's Third Technical Test experiment. We will continue our participation in the work towards establishing the effective international verification system needed to ensure a credible Treaty. Norway will continue to provide assistance in order to promote broad geographic participation in the Third Technical Test, thereby laying the foundation for envisaged participation in the International Monitoring System.

In order to facilitate the speedy establishment of the CTBT preparatory commission, and to ensure that the CTBT organization is fully operational immediately after the Treaty has entered into force, Norway is prepared to provide technical expertise as well as financial support.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is of key importance in the nuclear disarmament process. The strengthened NPT review process will play a central role in the preparations leading up to the next review conference, in the year 2000. During this process, the nuclear-weapon States have the opportunity to contribute substantially. We believe that a halt in the qualitative upgrading of nuclear weapons arsenals and further comprehensive reductions will lead to a strengthening of the non-proliferation regime.

The agreements between the United States and the Russian Federation on nuclear disarmament and arms control have made it possible to reduce the number of nuclear weapons drastically. It is important to ensure that the strategic disarmament process is continued in a controlled and orderly manner. The reductions in nuclear weapons arsenals prescribed by the START II agreement inspire greater confidence in the willingness of the major nuclear Powers to build down their stockpiles. Norway encourages ongoing preparations for negotiations on strategic reductions beyond those prescribed by START II, and calls for an early start of such negotiations, involving, as appropriate, the other nuclear-weapon States as well.

It is important for the disarmament process to strengthen control of all plutonium and highly-enriched uranium. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will start negotiations on an agreement prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes as soon as possible in 1997. A cut-off agreement is important to reduce the availability of fissile material which can be used in nuclear explosives, and would thus be a significant measure in our efforts to prevent proliferation.

The stocks of fissile material held by nuclear Powers are currently not subject to international control. The nuclear Powers should work towards enhanced transparency as regards their stocks of weapons-grade fissile material. As a first step, the nuclear Powers should on a voluntary basis provide information on their stocks of plutonium and highly-enriched uranium. A second step could be to agree on certain cooperative measures to clarify and confirm unilateral declarations. A process of increased transparency could take place in parallel with, and facilitate, negotiations on a cut-off agreement.

We also believe that the nuclear Powers should display greater openness about their nuclear weapons arsenals by providing information on their size and composition. This issue is particularly important in the current phase following the indefinite extension of the NPT. Greater openness concerning nuclear weapons arsenals could thus play an important role as a confidence-building measure.

A landmark multilateral disarmament treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, is expected to enter into force during the first half of 1997. The Convention has been signed by 160 States, and 64 States have ratified it so far. This testifies to the broad international support the Convention enjoys. Although we welcome the fact that the Convention is about to enter into force, it is a matter of concern that the only two declared possessors of chemical weapons, the United States and the Russian Federation, have yet to ratify it. We therefore call upon those two States in particular to do so without further delay.

Over the past three years a substantial effort has been made to establish a verification regime to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Such verification measures, including on-site investigations, would undoubtedly improve our ability to protect our peoples from those who would use disease as a weapon of war. These efforts need to be pursued with a view to producing a recommended protocol on verification by 1998

at the latest. We hope the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons later this year will inject the necessary impetus to this end.

Greater transparency in military matters and the systematic nurturing of confidence among States are key elements in bringing about a more stable, prosperous and better-governed world community. Accumulation of conventional armaments can only trigger mutual suspicion. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms performs an important function in increasing international confidence, insofar as Member nations of the United Nations lend their full support. Our future efforts should be directed along two tracks: increased participation by Member States and the extension of the scope of the data submitted with the aim of submitting all relevant data.

The United Nations could also play an important role in relation to practical disarmament measures in regions that have suffered from conflict. Such measures could include the collection and disposal of small arms and light weapons, the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and demining. This would contribute to consolidating peace and security and to preventing the recurrence of conflict.

I would also briefly like to refer to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. My Government believes that these Centres continue to conduct useful activities, and Norway will continue to support them, as we have done in the past.

Anti-personnel landmines are among the most insidiously destructive weapons widely used in war. They continue to spread terror for years, or even decades, after hostilities have ended. We should all recognize that the military utility of anti-personnel landmines is far outweighed by their cost in human and socio-economic terms. The outcome of the Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons earlier this year fell far short of our expectations. The amended Protocol II on mines and booby-traps does not ban anti-personnel mines and does not go as far in the area of interim protection for civilians as we and many others would have wished. This is disappointing, but we welcome the amended Protocol as an important first step on the road to a legally binding global ban, and urge all United Nations Member States to adhere to the Convention.

By 1 October this year all anti-personnel mines in Norwegian military stockpiles had been removed and destroyed. By carrying out this extensive phasing out and destruction programme, Norway has now become a country free from anti-personnel mines. We hope this position will help the ongoing international efforts to ban these weapons. We are encouraged that an increasing number of countries is now advocating a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. In our view, the Ottawa process improves the prospect of achieving a treaty banning all production, transfers, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. Norway is ready to join Canada and other countries in negotiating such a treaty to be ready for signature in December 1997.

We regret the failure of the Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to provide Protocol II on landmines with an effective verification mechanism. As a complementary transparency- and confidence-building measure to this Protocol, we should invite the Secretary-General to establish an international register of information on stockpiles of all types of anti-personnel landmines as well as on producers of anti-personnel landmines of types whose use is prohibited by the amended Protocol II of the CCW Convention. All United Nations Member States should be encouraged to provide information regarding their stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines and to submit it to the Secretary-General. Moreover, Governments, United Nations personnel and non-governmental organizations involved in authorized mine-clearing projects, should be invited to collect and submit relevant information on producers that manufacture prohibited anti-personnel mines. This information could be an integral part of a policy designed to prevent or deter States from using anti-personnel mines of types prohibited by the amended Protocol II on landmines, by making it more likely that such use will be detected at an early stage.

With regard to other items on the agenda within the purview of the Committee, I would like to refer to the statement made at the 3rd meeting by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, with which Norway was aligned.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. Our warm congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

The end of the cold war created a positive international political climate conducive to arms limitation and disarmament. We should take advantage of this window of opportunity to achieve substantive agreements in this field. This new international political climate necessitates the adoption of new approaches in addressing disarmament

issues and a review of old strategic concepts and doctrines, lingering from the cold-war period.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for the nuclear-weapon States to review and revise their nuclear doctrines and policies. It is our view that, with the cold war and the East-West confrontation behind us, the nuclear-weapon States no longer need to rely on nuclear weapons to defend their vital security interests. In fact, nuclear weapons have never been used since the tragic atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

In the present-day world, nuclear weapons are no longer usable by the nuclear-weapon States. They must, therefore, be eliminated, and their use must be outlawed. In this context, we welcome the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice dated 8 July 1996. In its advisory opinion, the Court ruled that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the international law applicable to armed conflict and, in particular, the principles and rules of humanitarian law. The Court further reaffirmed unanimously the legal position that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to comprehensive nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. This historic advisory opinion of the Court de-legitimizes the use of nuclear weapons. Although the advisory opinion of the Court is not legally binding, it will certainly be helpful in the crystallization in due course of customary legal norms on the non-use of nuclear weapons. It also further reinforces our moral and legal arguments and rationale for nuclear disarmament with a view to total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

In our view, which is shared by an overwhelming majority of the non-aligned countries, the following measures and agreements are essential for the step-by-step reduction of the nuclear threat and the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament: implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; a treaty banning fissile materials; an international legal instrument or instruments on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States and on other aspects of banning the use of nuclear weapons; and an international treaty or treaties on the step-by-step reduction of the nuclear threat and on a phased programme of progressive and balanced deep reduction of nuclear weapons with a view to the total elimination of these weapons within a time-bound framework.

We welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test- Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996. The Treaty, although the Conference on Disarmament was not able to endorse it, is a significant achievement by the Conference. It is not perfect, but it is the best the Conference on Disarmament can produce, given the prevailing situation. An end to nuclear test explosions by all States in all environments for all time is an essential step in preventing the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear weapons and their further proliferation. This, together with other measures I mentioned earlier, will contribute to nuclear disarmament, leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. I should, however, like to stress here that it is extremely important that the Treaty enter into force expeditiously and attract universal adherence by Member States.

The time is opportune to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument providing security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We urge that further efforts be pursued at the preparatory meetings for the NPT review conference and in the Conference on Disarmament in 1997 with a view to producing tangible results on this important issue.

At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Myanmar, on behalf of 32 other sponsors and with the support of an overwhelming majority of non-aligned countries, introduced a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament. In fact, the draft resolution was submitted in pursuance of the decision contained in the Final Document of the Eleventh Summit Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries. It was adopted by the General Assembly with the overwhelming support of 106 positive votes.

Resolution 50/70 P is the first General Assembly resolution to call for the commencement of multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a phased programme of progressive and balanced deep reductions of nuclear weapons leading to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. The importance of this resolution cannot be overemphasized. Accordingly, it is hoped that the General Assembly will once again approve at this fifty-first session a follow-up resolution to resolution 50/70 P on nuclear disarmament with the support of an overwhelming majority of Member States.

Another question that must be addressed with urgency is that of banning fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to commence substantive negotiations on this subject at the beginning of its 1997 session.

Conventional arms control also needs to be addressed in our disarmament endeavours. The question of conventional arms control is very complex. There is a big difference in the nature of nuclear weapons and of conventional weapons. This necessitates the adoption of a different approach to conventional arms control. In the case of conventional arms control, we should pinpoint specific problems and address them. It is therefore very important that we first identify precisely an issue before placing it on our agenda of disarmament negotiations. In the view of my delegation, illicit trafficking in conventional arms and their illicit use are the pressing problems that need to be addressed in the field of conventional arms control.

Now turning to activities in our region to promote disarmament, I should like to commend the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for having done an excellent job in organizing regional conferences and seminars on various disarmament issues in the past year. These regional conferences and seminars provide us an opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions on current security and disarmament issues in our region, and to contribute our views on global disarmament questions from our national and regional perspectives. We recommend that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific should continue its useful activities and should even increase these activities wherever possible.

We stand at the threshold of the third millennium. We must do our utmost to resolve the disarmament questions I have outlined with new approaches and a new determination, as required by present-day realities. For my delegation, as well as for the delegations of most other countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, nuclear disarmament is the highest priority on our future disarmament agenda. Our vision is a nuclear-weapon-free world. Let us redouble our efforts for the early realization of this vision.

Mr. Acemah (Uganda): Permit me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, upon your unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of the Committee. We are confident that under your able guidance the First Committee will handle its work with characteristic efficiency. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The beginning of this decade marked the end of the cold war. Our hopes were raised for a world based on the ideals of dialogue and trust rather than on mutual suspicion and mistrust. It was to be a world geared towards the attainment of peace and security aimed at the twin goals of economic development and social progress for all humankind. Unfortunately, peace and development still elude many countries. The menaces of regional conflicts, oppression and injustice still afflict the majority of humankind. For them the end of the cold war is indeed meaningless. Their plight cries out for action. The United Nations must give hope to these despairing people and stand in the forefront of the struggle for peace — which is not simply the absence of war, hot or cold; but something which we must all actively seek. Peace indeed is about mutual caring for all mankind.

The birth of the nuclear era, marked by the bombing of Hiroshima a few weeks after the signing of the United Nations Charter in June 1945, gave added meaning to the words "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". It also gave this Organization an added role in the field of disarmament. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament concluded that disarmament had become the most urgent task facing the international community. It agreed in its Programme of Action that priorities and measures in the field of disarmament should be undertaken as a matter of urgency in the areas of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons and conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. There was also established a comprehensive programme with agreed time-frames for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their eventual elimination.

Nearly two decades later and well into the Third Disarmament Decade, international action in this regard has on balance been disappointing. The nuclear-weapon States continue to hold on to their arsenals. The number of nuclear warheads may have been reduced, but with the qualitative improvements made, the destructive capacities have in fact been enhanced. Solemn declarations about their intention to eliminate nuclear weapons have been made. However, in the absence of concrete time-frames, prevarication on this matter has become the norm. The world is looking for results. That is why my delegation wishes today to associate itself fully with the submission made by 28 countries to the Conference on Disarmament on 8 August 1996 on a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons in three phases, with a view to the consolidation of a nuclear-weapon-free world in the year 2020.

Let me briefly touch on the recently concluded Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Uganda

welcomes the Treaty as a first step towards the attainment of the goal of total nuclear disarmament. We regret that the CTBT prohibits only explosive nuclear tests while ignoring other forms of technology aimed at qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons. If the Treaty is to be effective, it must be able to stem both vertical and horizontal proliferation. In this regard, my delegation wishes to state that an effective treaty should end all nuclear testing. We therefore consider the present CTBT simply as a first step in the long march towards the total elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specific time-frame. Indeed, we are concerned about the attitude of some nuclear Powers that sub-critical nuclear tests are permissible under the CTBT because there is no nuclear criticality or fission chain reaction. We view this attitude as an indication that some of these Powers are not really committed to the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons. We are also disappointed that the Treaty includes no articles on non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. A "no-first-use" provision would also have been useful and reassuring.

Despite its obvious defects, CTBT should be strictly adhered to, particularly by the declared nuclear Powers. The spirit of disarmament with which it was negotiated must be scrupulously observed by those with a nuclear capacity; otherwise it will become a test-explosion-ban Treaty and will ignite a nuclear-weapon technology race.

Last April, at Cairo, Uganda, together with several other African countries, signed the Treaty of Pelindaba, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. Africa is a unique region in this regard, as it is home to a former nuclear-weapon State: South Africa. Under the Treaty, all nations committed themselves to declaring any capability of manufacturing nuclear explosive devices. By pioneering complete openness, the Government of South Africa acted with great courage and sincerity. We hope that this will serve as an example for other anticipated nuclear-weapon-free zones. We pay tribute to the Republic of South Africa for its leadership in the field of nuclear disarmament.

The end of the cold war and the subsequent end of the super-Power rivalry presented us with a golden opportunity to achieve the long-held desire of the countries of the Indian Ocean region to declare that region a zone of peace. We believe that these changed circumstances demand that the five permanent members of the Security Council participate fully in the process of shaping the final character of the anticipated zone of peace. We are disappointed that these countries have chosen not to take part in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. The argument that a zone of peace would restrict the freedom of movement of their navies is unfortunate because it prejudges the conclusions of the negotiating process.

We call upon the five permanent members of the Security Council to recognize that there is an overwhelming desire on the part of the States in the region, and the international community in general, to achieve the objectives of resolution 2832 (XXVI) of 16 December 1971 and subsequent resolutions, including resolution 50/76 of 12 December 1995. The Indian Ocean is too important to the global economy and to international peace and security to be utilized on an ad hoc basis. Such a situation is a recipe for future discord.

The menace of terrorism, internal conflicts, organized crime and drug trafficking demands that the international community take action on the spread and transfer of conventional weapons. Such weapons today pose a danger to the economies, sovereignty and well-being of many small States. Indeed, the survival of fledgling democracies in these countries is threatened.

Commercial considerations, which are currently the driving force behind transactions in conventional weapons, must be critically re-examined. A spirit of common responsibility for international, regional and national security must be adopted. The effects of past failed policies in this regard are too evident and chilling to be ignored. The tragedies of Somalia, Liberia and Afghanistan are just a few examples.

Transparency has been proposed as a solution to problems created by conventional weapons. While my delegation agrees with this view, we believe that it is only a partial solution. What is necessary is global action grounded in international cooperation for a comprehensive, non-selective, non-discriminatory, balanced and effective reduction in conventional weapons, particularly in areas of conflict and tension. Self-restraint by major weapon-exporting countries can play a pivotal role in this regard. It is only when the suppliers cease to be willing to supply that positive results will be achieved.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the benefits of the end of the cold war continue to elude most countries. They have neither reaped the benefits of the "peace dividend" nor attained regional peace. The time has come for the international community to come together to seek durable solutions to the underlying causes of conflicts and threats to international peace and security. Total and complete disarmament within a specified time-frame would be a vital contribution to this search for solutions.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to you, Sir, the warm congratulations of my delegation on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I also wish to extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and to assure you of the full cooperation of the delegation of Mali. I wish to take this opportunity also to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Eredenechuluun of Mongolia, for the remarkable work accomplished during the last session.

The current session of our Committee is taking place under favourable auspices. For several months the international community, with a redeeming burst of energy, has rediscovered the virtues of multilateral dialogue as the best means of resolving the complex and sensitive problems of disarmament and international security.

Considerable progress has been achieved in this area, especially with regard to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear and chemical weapons. After the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Mali welcomed in a spirit of hope the opening for signature in New York on 24 September the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which constitutes an important stage in progress towards complete disarmament.

Mali, which joined in sponsoring the resolution through which the Treaty was adopted, will sign the Treaty in the next few days. In the same spirit, Mali welcomes the conclusion over the years of Treaties on regional denuclearization in Latin America, the South Pacific, Africa and South-East Asia. My country hopes that this dynamic will extend to other areas, especially the Middle East and the rest of the southern hemisphere. My delegation believes that signing such instruments strengthens the denuclearization regime, in this case the NPT and the CTBT, and contributes to freeing our planet from the threat of nuclear destruction.

Despite these significant advances, other disarmament questions remain unresolved, especially with regard to bacteriological and chemical weapons. Mali hopes that the relevant treaties will be rapidly concluded so as to protect humankind from these types of weapons. With regard to anti-personnel landmines, whose devastating effects remain long after conflicts are over, the Government of Mali is absolutely in favour of the conclusion of a treaty for an end to the production and for the total elimination of this type of weapon.

Mali's commitment to general and complete disarmament is an act of faith that will be achieved through national as well as international initiatives. In 1994 the President of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, requested and obtained special assistance from the Secretary-General to establish an advisory mission to study ways and means to curb the proliferation of small arms in the Sahel-Saharan subregion. Mali's initiative was supported by other countries of the region, in addition to those of other regions, during the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the General Assembly through the adoption of resolutions 49/75 G and 50/70 H.

This affords us an opportunity to thank all the countries that, with Mali, are sponsoring the draft resolution on assistance to States in curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and in collecting them. I should also like to appeal to all other countries to support that draft resolution.

As members know, Mali's initiative has contributed to creating within the Organization the now-celebrated concept of micro-disarmament, a concept designed to draw the international community's attention to the disastrous consequences of small arms, especially in developing countries, where they greatly contribute to fuelling conflicts.

Now, we must take action. In so doing, the international community must lend wholehearted support to the efforts being made by the countries of the Sahel-Saharan subregion to curb the proliferation of small arms, particularly through effective border control and a reappraisal of the legal instruments relating to the bearing of arms.

We must effectively control the flow of weapons in our subregion, which entails considering the creation of a subregional register of conventional arms and a data bank. My country, Mali, is working on this and hopes that it may be progressively extended to include al the States of the Sahel-Saharan subregion.

Along the same lines, on 27 March 1996 my Government organized at Timbuktu a symbolic ceremonial destruction of stockpiles of several thousand weapons turned over by ex-combatants belonging to armed movements in the north of Mali. The ceremony, which was known as "Flame of Peace," was led by Mali's Head of State, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, and was attended by the President of the Republic of Ghana, the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and ministerial delegations from several of Mali's neighbours. The United Nations, which had contributed to

the peace efforts and to the collection of small arms through its Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, sent a large delegation.

At the dawn of the third millennium the essential question remains the identification of measures that can ensure stability and security for all, without nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction. In that context, Mali supports the principle of convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, for which we have high hopes.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. Chairman, allow me at the outset to extend my warm congratulations to you and to the other officers of the First Committee on your election to guide this important Committee. We are convinced that under your leadership our work will be crowned with success.

This session of the First Committee is taking place in an international context that is marked by important developments in the field of disarmament, among them the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its opening for signature. So far, 126 countries, including Tunisia, have signed that Treaty. This represents a widespread impetus that is in keeping with the importance of this new instrument, for which non-nuclear, and particularly non-aligned, countries have waited so long and with such hope. Notwithstanding some reservations, it is also in keeping with the international community's profound awareness of the need to foster the cause of nuclear disarmament. However, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will achieve full significance only if it benefits from the determined resolve of all, and in particular of the nuclear States, to achieve a complete cessation of the arms race in all its aspects, nuclear disarmament and the ultimate complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The attainment of that goal, which now more than ever seems within the reach of the international community, calls for implementing the other commitments entered into by the nuclear Powers at the 1995 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as set forth in the Conference's decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Among those commitments, pride of place is given to the early conclusion of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile material for military purposes and the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally. In this connection, we must accelerate the process to achieve effective implementation of the START II Treaty and early completion of new agreements on further reductions of the strategic weapons arsenals of the two major nuclear Powers.

The creation of denuclearized zones should continue to be encouraged as a consolidating factor in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and as a significant contribution to the strengthening of peace and security at the regional and international levels.

In this connection, Tunisia is proud to note the conclusion last April of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which establishes Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone; we have acceded to that Treaty. We call upon the nuclear Powers to respect the status of that zone and to adhere to the relevant protocols of the Treaty that established it. The conclusion of the Treaty of Pelindaba denotes the firm will of the African States to rid the continent of the spectre of nuclear weapons, and their steadfast commitment to contribute to achieving the goals of world-wide nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The denuclearized zone in Africa and that created in South-East Asia in December 1995 by the Bangkok Treaty join the denuclearized zones already created in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the South Pacific to consolidate a welcome evolution towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the whole of the southern hemisphere.

Yet, in the Middle East, a sphere of tension, the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone has not yet been achieved, notwithstanding the repeated appeals not only of the States of the region but of the whole of the international community, as reflected in the many consensus resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. With the accession of the United Arab Emirates and Djibouti to the NPT and the announced accession of the Sultanate of Oman, which we welcome with great satisfaction, Israel is the only country in the region not to have acceded to the NPT and the only one with an uncontrolled nuclear capability, posing a constant and direct threat to security in the Middle East and an obstacle to the establishment of a denuclearized zone in that region. We repeat our appeal to Israel to accede to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Still with reference to weapons of mass destruction, it is important that the 1993 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction should enter into force. Tunisia, which was among the first to sign the Convention, has maintained its full commitment to it and is about to complete the process preparatory to its ratification. We welcome with satisfaction the fact that more than 60 countries have ratified the Convention, thus bringing it close to its entry into force. Nevertheless, we believe that the accession of the two major producers of chemical weapons, the United States and the Russian Federation, is of particular importance for the Convention's success.

In another area, efforts to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction must also continue so as to give that instrument an appropriate verification mechanism.

Problems in the area of conventional weapons are among the most pressing. First and foremost, the international community is involved with the problem of landmines, those fearsome devices which cost little to produce but cause indiscriminate destruction among the civilian population. Multifaceted action is therefore necessary at all levels, including on the part of the United Nations, to put an end to that scourge.

Significant progress was accomplished last year with the agreement reached last May at Geneva by the States parties to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects on a number of amendments to Protocol II to that Convention. By virtue of those amendments, the scope of the Protocol is extended to armed conflicts which are not of an international nature; the use of anti-personnel mines which do not self-destruct or self-deactivate is also banned permanently.

Despite their restrictions on the transfer and use of mines, these improvements to the 1980 Convention are still not the best solution to the problem of mines. In our view, that requires a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, towards which the international community must work in the future. Tunisia will join First Committee efforts to consolidate the principle of a total and permanent ban on anti-personnel landmines.

The question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament is of the highest importance for my country. It is our view that the countries that wish to join as full members that unique forum for the negotiation of multilateral treaties in the area of disarmament should be able to do so. It is in that spirit that Tunisia welcomes the decision taken by the Conference on Disarmament last June on the admission of 23 new members to the Conference. Inspired by that same concern, my country is participating in an initiative taken by a group of States to submit a new draft resolution calling on the Conference on Disarmament to consider at its 1997 session the other candidacies it has received, including that of Tunisia.

The end of the cold war has taught us that, among other things, that security was not only the military dimension of the absence of armed conflict and disarmament. No matter how important that dimension is, and it is very important indeed, it is not enough to bring about viable, lasting peace and security. This is shown by the persistence on the ashes of bipolar confrontation of many hotbeds of tension which fuel the new or revived phenomena of narrow nationalism, xenophobia, tribalism, extremism and terrorism, which most often occur in a context of the acute social and economic difficulties facing many countries and peoples in the southern hemisphere. This means that the world is calling today for a new concept of security, an interactive global security that comprehends all aspects of human security — including the military ones, of course, but also economic, social, cultural, human and environmental aspects.

It is this dynamic concept of security which my country supports and which is the foundation of its policy regarding relations with all of its partners, especially in the Mediterranean. In the Mediterranean, Tunisia takes an active part in the process leading to the building and consolidation of a multifaceted partnership between the north and south shores of the Mediterranean, with political dialogue, cooperation in all areas, a common struggle against the challenges to the countries of the region, and a commitment to the universal values of tolerance, democracy and respect for human rights.

There can be no true security unless peoples have confidence in their future and in the future of their children, unless there is justice and human solidarity which allows all to live in peace and harmony: because the purpose of all action is men and women and their happiness. For all of this, strengthening international cooperation for the economic and social development of the countries of the

South and the reduction of the disparities between the North and the South are more urgent than ever.

Today, thanks to reductions in military arsenals and to the economies which this has allowed in military budgets, disarmament is able to contribute significantly to augmenting the resources needed to promote the economies of the countries of the South and to create a more balanced and harmonious world.

Ms. Darmanin (Malta): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, allow me to congratulate you on your election. Your abilities will certainly guide our work to a successful outcome. Malta associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

The pursuit of international security and disarmament remains at the core of the existence of this Organization. Recent steps taken by the international community to overcome and contain threats to peace have witnessed confidence replace mistrust and peaceful coexistence supplant tension and suspicion.

This year was marked by another step forward in the disarmament process: the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Following the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the adoption of the CTBT reflects the continued commitment of States to achieve the noble objective of disarmament. This is a significant step in a process which furthers the momentum achieved over past years and provides an impetus for future agreements.

The adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba and the ratification of the Treaty of Rarotonga by France, the United Kingdom and the United States, together with ongoing efforts in South-East Asia are an encouraging signal of the commitment of States to the consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We hope that similar achievement may one day be the blessing of the Middle East.

The disarmament agenda remains: the need for broader confidence to ensure the universal adherence and compliance to adopted treaties. In the wake of significant steps in nuclear disarmament, the reduction of bipolar tensions and the explosion of regional conflicts following the end of the cold war, the priorities have mushroomed. Remote as it may be, the risk of world conflict is still present, as is the risk of the overspill of local wars.

The total horror of a nuclear holocaust induces in-built restraint. This, however, is not the case with conventional armaments or weapons of mass destruction, which inflict suffering on millions in conflicts world wide. Many States are perhaps more vulnerable to the threat of such arms, be they conventional, chemical or biological. The indiscriminate and cruel effects of the use of such armaments shock us into action. The images of victims, be they women, children, maimed, refugees or displaced persons, require of us concerted action to curb the inhumane use of such weapons.

Malta looks forward to the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the completion of a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and the entry into force of the additional Protocols to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. A cut-off treaty on fissile material remains one of the next priorities of the international community.

The call for a ban on the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines has Malta's full support. Initiatives taken to achieve a global ban on anti-personnel landmines are a commensurate response to the global suffering which has been wrought by such mines and deserve the full support of the international community. The assistance of Member States in demining, such as that provided by the European Union, is commendable and worthy of support.

Only a consolidated regime of confidence-building and disarmament measures can buttress the belief in and commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. Such a process of confidence-building requires concerted regional and international action. At the international level, initiatives such as the standardized reporting of military expenditure, objective information on military matters and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms are all measures which build confidence through transparency and trust. The enhancement of such mechanisms buttresses our collective efforts to build security and peace.

At the regional level, increased cooperation can play a crucial role in the consolidation of stability. Malta's proposal that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declare itself a regional arrangement, in the terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter,

was inspired by the benefits of enhanced mutual assistance and cooperation between international and regional organizations. Addressing the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malta, Mr. Guido de Marco stated,

> "It is still too early to assess the impact and full potential of that development, particularly in view of the complex situations which already existed and continued to develop in the CSCE region. However, the future ability and effectiveness of the United Nations in containing, addressing and resolving situations of conflict is dependent on the creation and consolidation of such regional arrangements". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 10th meeting, p. 21)*

Comprehensive regional security is distinct from notions of defence. It encompasses a wide-ranging cooperation policy at different levels in a number of fields. It seeks to melt the bastions of suspicion and consolidate a regime of confidence-building measures which ultimately yield peace and stability.

Malta has been active in the promotion of security and cooperation at the regional level. At the crossroads of cultures and history, the Mediterranean is wrought by tension and vulnerable to conflict. Malta has always stated its belief that the security of Europe and security in the Mediterranean are mutually dependent. Conscious of this dependence and the need for interlocking and reciprocally reinforcing institutions and mechanisms, Malta has promoted a broad-ranging cooperative policy for the Mediterranean.

The essence of initiatives such as those for a council of the Mediterranean and the stability pact for the Mediterranean is recognition of the need for a multifaceted and broad-ranging approach to address destabilizing threats. At the Euro-Med Information and Training Seminar held in Malta, the Deputy Prime Minister of my country said,

> "The pursuit of peace in the Mediterranean should be translated into a concrete exercise of preventive diplomacy".

The proposed stability pact for the Mediterranean is based on the notion that flexible structures and mechanisms facilitate the defusing of regional tensions as they emerge. The continued interest in this proposal augurs well for its future development.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership launched in Barcelona last year is another example of common efforts to address root causes of tension and conflict. The wide-ranging contacts established through mutual cooperation in the political, security, economic and financial fields, as well as those of social, cultural and human relations, serve as a basis to build understanding and trust while respecting and enhancing the diversity characteristic of the region. The widening and deepening of contacts through this forum will certainly contribute to the overall stability of the region and well-being of its people.

Many points have been raised during this general debate, providing us with an opportunity to reflect on the number of priorities which remain. Agreements reached in recent years require our continued attention and vigilance. Adherence and universality of agreements is the guarantee by which States are assured their security, regions their stability and the international community its peace.

Our efforts must remain constant and sustained to strengthen what has been achieved and to conquer new ground in the interest of international peace and security.

Mr. Edwards (Marshall Islands): We offer you our sincere congratulations, Mr. Chairman, on your well-deserved election, and we look forward to working with you during this session. We also extend warm congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, who are all well known to us as skilled and competent representatives.

As the Committee is no doubt aware, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is currently the Chairman of the South Pacific Forum. The member States of the Forum that are also members of the United Nations have submitted some views to the Secretary-General in the form of the South Pacific Forum communiqué. I wish to take this opportunity to expand on some of its points as a contribution to this debate from the national delegation of the Marshall Islands. The other members of the Forum have made and will make their own remarks in their national capacities.

The Forum expressed satisfaction at the permanent cessation of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. This marked the end of all nuclear testing in a region which had been subjected to both atmospheric and underground testing for five decades. China's recent announcement of a moratorium on nuclear testing means that all five nuclear-weapon States are now observing testing moratoriums, which has been long urged by the Forum. Earlier this month the General Assembly took action to adopt and open for signature the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

(CTBT). This effort was fully supported by the Forum, and the resolution was co-sponsored by all the United Nations Members that are members of the Forum. We are pleased with the adoption of resolution 50/245, and urge all States to join with us in signing and ratifying the CTBT as soon as possible to facilitate the Treaty's early implementation. We are particularly grateful to the Government of Fiji for being the first country to ratify the Treaty, and we commend it for its initiative. We look forward to the first meeting of the preparatory committee for the CTBT.

The leaders of my region also warmly welcome the signature and ratification by Vanuatu of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the signature of Tonga and the signing of the Protocols to the Treaty by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. As a result of these developments, all States within the Treaty area have now given their support to the Treaty, and all five nuclear-weapon States have undertaken to respect its provisions. We welcome the ratification by France of the Protocols, and the Forum also urges early ratification of the Protocols by the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

My delegation would like to note that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has now concluded the collection of samples from the nuclear-weapon test sites in French Polynesia. The expedition was conducted by 11 distinguished scientists, and we are encouraged by the fact that they appear to have been given fairly good access to the test sites. My delegation would, however, be more comfortable with this scientific process if a preliminary report could be made available to concerned delegations. Since the final results will not be available until late next year, we would like to have an indication of what we will be facing in the future. In this regard we take note of the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Planning and Environment of Seychelles. She reflected on the historical relationships between small island developing States and the colonial Powers, and how the small island developing States have been made to serve the interests of the colonial regime. The Minister reflected that upon independence, these islands have often been left to their own means to deal with the problems which were left behind. We have some knowledge of what this means in real terms, not just in theory, and we are hopeful that the same situation will not arise in French Polynesia once self-determination is granted to its people.

The Forum leaders were encouraged by the establishment since their last meeting of two nuclear-weapon-free zones, in South- East Asia and Africa. Leaders noted with satisfaction that these developments represented progress with respect to the decisions accompanying the indefinite extension in 1995 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this context, Forum leaders expressed support for an appropriate resolution at this session of the United Nations General Assembly whereby signatory States of the southern hemisphere nuclear-weapon-free- zone treaties and other members of the international community could affirm their support for these zones and cooperate in the furtherance of the goals of the zones and of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. I am pleased to be able to inform this Committee that this process is now well under way and that the Marshall Islands will be co-sponsoring the relevant resolution.

The Forum again reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility towards those peoples of the former United Nations Trust Territory administered by the United States, the Marshall Islands, that had been adversely affected as a result of nuclear- weapon tests conducted during the period of the Trusteeship. This responsibility included safe resettlement of displaced human populations and the restoration of affected areas to economic productivity. This is a matter of extreme importance to the Marshall Islands, and we feel strongly that urgent progress needs to be made. We are grateful that some steps have been taken by the former administering Power, but we need to fully address all issues between us. The international community has an acknowledged role to play, and we would welcome further assistance and interest.

We should recall the Advisory Opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which recognized that all members of the international community have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. The Forum leaders urged all States concerned, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to continue meaningful negotiations with a view to further significant reductions of nuclear stockpiles at an early date as a step towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Forum wishes again to raise concerns over shipments of plutonium and radioactive wastes through our region. These shipments must be carried out in accordance with the strictest international safety and security standards. All contingencies must be fully addressed, and full consultation must be carried out with the countries of the regions through which the shipments will occur. In this regard, I wish to note the statements made by a number of

our good friends from the Caribbean region in plenary meeting — the Bahamas, Grenada and Dominica. I wish to reiterate firmly our solidarity with the apprehension expressed by Barbados at having such shipments go through that region.

We also wish to express our strong support for the work being carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. In our view, this is one of the more subtle ways in which the United Nations can be utilized as an efficient vehicle for the promotion of peace and understanding between peoples. The Centre should be supported in these efforts, as it does a commendable job in a very cost-effective manner.

At the regional level, we have been taking steps to limit the threats to our common security from criminal activities. We have recognized that effective regional cooperation in the field of law enforcement will help us combat these threats. In this regard, the Forum Regional Security Committee will meet to examine ways to take forward the implementation of the Honiara Declaration of Law Enforcement Cooperation. The Regional Security Committee has also been asked to study and report on the potential seriousness of any increased movement of weapons throughout the region. The countries of the Pacific intend to work together on this matter and strongly urge international support for our efforts. We will report to the United Nations, in particular to this Committee, on these experiences and progress made when the opportunity arises.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a prime example of how the United Nations can assist the international community with confidence-building measures. It is our firm belief that this Register will go a long way towards allaying the fears of neighbours that have tense relations within their regions. The Marshall Islands thinks that for the successful operation of this Register, all States must comply with the reporting, and we hope to see universal application of the Register in the near future. We feel that by our own report of no new purchases or sales of arms, we are contributing to creating the openness which we all seek in our international relations. Furthermore, I am sure that most members are aware that the Marshall Islands is one of the few countries in the world that has no armed forces other than our national police and fisheries patrols. We are doing our best to cooperate in the promotion of global security and mutual cooperation for all States and hope to see an equally supportive attitude from our colleagues in this Committee.

In conclusion, we look forward to a fruitful discussion in this Committee of all issues related to disarmament and international security, and we pledge our cooperation.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): This year, we have witnessed one of the most remarkable achievements in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. The successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) represents the culmination of the long-standing and determined aspirations of the international community to end nuclear-test explosions once and for all. As a staunch supporter of the CTBT, my delegation firmly believes that it represents a critical step towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and that towards fulfilment of the obligations set forth in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

However, as many delegations have pointed out, the CTBT is not an end in itself. Only when all States make a committed effort to pursue further measures for nuclear disarmament can we take meaningful steps towards the eventual world-wide abolition of nuclear weapons and realize our ultimate goal of a totally denuclearized world.

In recognition of the vital significance of the CTBT, the Government of the Republic of Korea endorsed it as an original signatory to the Treaty. We urge all countries that have not signed the Treaty to do so at the earliest possible date. Furthermore, to secure the CTBT's early entry into force and its effective implementation, all signatory States, particularly the 44 States required for the Treaty's enforcement, are requested to make every effort to expedite their domestic ratification process.

Another critical instrument in the field of disarmament that should be pursued with urgency and priority is a cut-off treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. My delegation calls for the immediate commencement of negotiations on a cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. Coupled with the CTBT, a cut-off treaty will undoubtedly increase momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

That being said, my delegation wishes to emphasize that the nuclear-weapon States, which are required to assume greater responsibility for the fulfilment of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, should take more systematic and progressive steps towards the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth by further reducing their nuclear-weapon arsenals. In this regard, my delegation notes that the International Court of Justice, in its recent advisory opinion

concerning the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, concluded unanimously that the nuclear Powers are under an obligation:

> "to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182)*

Despite significant progress in international efforts towards the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, the Korean peninsula is still living under the shadow of nuclear proliferation. While we recognize that there has been some headway in the implementation of the Framework Agreement between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), North Korea has yet to fulfil its multilateral obligations under the NPT. We remain gravely concerned that the DPRK's persistent non-compliance with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) poses a dangerous challenge to the integrity and credibility of the global non-proliferation regime and the IAEA safeguards system. Therefore, my delegation again urges the DPRK to come promptly into full compliance with its safeguards obligations under the NPT. Pending such full compliance, North Korea should take all steps deemed necessary by the IAEA to preserve intact all information relevant to verifying the accuracy and completeness of North Korea's initial report.

We also urge the DPRK to live up to its non-proliferation commitments under the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which it freely agreed to implement by bringing it into force from February 1992.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to invite, albeit somewhat belatedly, 23 countries, including the Republic of Korea, to join the Conference as new members in June of this year. My country, as a new member of the Conference, stands ready to play its due role in strengthening multilateral efforts to achieve substantial disarmament in all areas, thus fostering international peace and security.

My delegation also believes that if the Conference on Disarmament is to garner universal support for its work and to broaden its representation, it should open its doors to all countries that have both the will and the capacity to contribute to the fulfilment of its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, a uniquely global, comprehensive and verifiable multilateral treaty that provides for the elimination of a whole category of weapons, is on the verge of gaining entry into force, with only one signatory State remaining to deposit its instrument of ratification for the threshold number to be reached. At this critical juncture, however, many countries have voiced their concern that the two major possessor countries have yet to ratify the Convention, which has resulted in delays that may have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the Convention. As a major disarmament agreement, the Chemical Weapons Convention should have all possessor countries — declared and undeclared alike — on board if it is to achieve its stated objectives. Regrettably, however, some countries still refuse to join the international community's initiative to eliminate these horrendous weapons, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the Convention as a disarmament treaty. My Government, therefore, is of the view that all signatory States should increase international pressure on those countries that have failed to join the Chemical Weapons Convention to do so as soon as possible so that the Convention can be launched as a truly universal disarmament regime.

Allow me to make some brief remarks on the ad hoc group meetings of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, which have been held at Geneva since 1995. At the special meeting in September 1994, ambitious goals were articulated for the adoption of an implementation and verification regime to strengthen the Convention at the Fourth Review Conference, to be held next month. In this regard, I am pleased to note that deliberations in the ad hoc group have enabled member States to identify the specific concerns and interests of each participating State. While this marks a fundamentally important starting point, the lack of significant progress indicates that much work remains for the ad hoc group to achieve its stated objective. My delegation hopes that intensified efforts for and active participation in next year's meetings by Member States will produce a legally binding instrument to strengthen the Convention as soon as possible.

Threats to international peace and security have been posed not only by weapons of mass destruction but also by the excessive build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level considered legitimate for the purpose of self-defence. In this regard, my delegation notes with satisfaction that in May of this year the Disarmament Commission successfully

its preparation of Guidelines for international arms transfers. We are convinced that those Guidelines, which are the first code of conduct in this field, will pave the way to enhancing transparency in international arms transfers and to eradicating illicit arms transfers.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate the importance of the submission of annual reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, a process which contributes to the enhancement of transparency in armaments. Since universal participation in the Register is critical to its success, my delegation urges all States to participate in the Register as soon as possible.

My Government shares the growing concern of the international community over the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. More than 100 million anti-personnel landmines scattered throughout the world not only inflict great suffering and casualties, principally among innocent civilians, but also pose a tremendous obstacle to economic and social development and the reconstruction of the affected region.

My Government has participated in the international effort to minimize and contain the tragic humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel landmines. In this context, my Government announced a one-year export moratorium on anti-personnel landmines in September of last year and has decided to extend it for another year. Furthermore, we are now positively considering accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, including the amended Protocol II, because of its humanitarian merits.

While we recognize the necessity of an international agreement to ban all anti-personnel landmines, the unique security situation on the Korean peninsula has created exceptional circumstances. In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the exceptional situation should be fully addressed until alternatives become available or the risk of aggression has been completely removed.

I should now like to turn to efforts made to achieve disarmament at the regional level. Any regional approach to arms control and disarmament has to consider the conditions and characteristics peculiar to the region. What tends to be neglected, however, is that regional efforts can strengthen the implementation of global arms-control and disarmament regimes.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the statement by the Chairman of the third Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) encouraged Forum countries to work together within the United Nations to promote greater global participation in the United Nations Register and to give active support to internationally recognized legal agreements for global arms control and disarmament, specifically the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Bacteriological Weapons Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the CTBT.

The ASEAN Regional Forum, the only region-wide multilateral security dialogue arrangement at the governmental level in the Asia-Pacific region, is contributing to the enhancement of transparency and mutual confidence in the region as a whole, which is essential to regional and global arm control and disarmament.

In this regard, I would remind delegations that in 1994 the Republic of Korea proposed the launching of a North-East Asia security dialogue, which was aimed at reducing tension and improving the security environment in North-East Asia through confidence-building measures among the six countries concerned. Although the North-East Asia security dialogue has not yet been launched, a track-II meeting — the North-East Asia Cooperation Dialogue — was initiated in 1993. Senior diplomats, defence officials and academics from the Republic of Korea, the United States, Japan, China and Russia have been attending its annual meetings to discuss common security concerns in the region. The countries concerned must make concerted efforts to encourage the DPRK's participation in the Track II meetings and, eventually, develop it into a government-level meeting, namely a North-East Asia security dialogue.

We are of the view that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, at Kathmandu, has proven to be a highly instrumental venue for strengthening regional disarmament efforts. As an active participant in the Kathmandu process and one of the donors of the Centre, my Government strongly hopes that the Centre will contribute to promoting a regional security dialogue through its continued activities.

The new environment in international relations provides us with the potential to make momentous strides in the area of disarmament and international security. In order to prepare ourselves optimally to rise to the challenges and take advantage of the new opportunities, we must have a fresh perspective and formulate innovative concepts and approaches in the face of new emerging issues.

Disarmament is a particularly crucial area that demands new insight from the international community and vigorous approaches to dealing with both old and new issues, such as landmines and micro-disarmament.

With the historic progress that has been made this year with the conclusion of the CTBT, following last year's indefinite extension of the NPT, the momentum towards non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is gaining strength. While we have surmounted perhaps one of the most daunting challenges facing us on the path to nuclear disarmament, the magnitude and importance of the tasks before us at this year's session of the First Committee compel us to build further on our success and move even more decisively to a new plateau in our enduring quest for general and complete disarmament under effective international control. I am confident that with positive thinking and a cooperative spirit, the First Committee can overcome these challenges, old and new, for the benefit of the peace and security of all mankind.

Before concluding, my delegation also wishes to join previous delegations in expressing to you, Mr. Chairman, its warm congratulations on your assumption of the leadership of this prestigious Committee.

Mr. Slade (Samoa): Mr. Chairman, my delegation would like to extend to you and to the other officers of the Committee our congratulations and the assurance of our support.

As of today, 126 countries, including all five declared nuclear-weapon States, have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), a Treaty we all know was brought directly to the General Assembly at the initiative of Australia. One State, Fiji — and we are proud to acknowledge the act of yet another South Pacific State — has ratified the Treaty. Such progress is remarkable, given the fact that the CTBT was adopted barely a month ago. It affords my delegation the greatest satisfaction.

That there is considerable political consensus in favour of permanently ending nuclear-weapons testing was very clear from the overwhelming vote in the General Assembly in favour of the CTBT. By the demonstrated resolve to subscribe to the Treaty, Member States are expressing both commitment and determination to move further and aim for tangible results in the disarmament process.

From the perspective of my country, this is a most welcome — indeed, a promising — situation. For over four decades we have all sought, and more insistently in recent years, to stop and to prohibit nuclear testing. The adoption of the CTBT therefore marks a very significant achievement for concerted action by the international community, and for us in the Pacific, who have for so long experienced the nightmare of nuclear testing, the Treaty bears the promise of a future of hope.

There is reason to be hopeful, because we see in the CTBT concrete commitments by the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States alike to achieving the ultimate goal of the total elimination of these weapons. The comprehensive verification arrangements laid down in the Treaty will greatly increase the level of international cooperation in the nuclear field. Moreover, the Treaty is a central element of the decision we took last year to extend indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in particular Decision 2 on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It will be critical to the success of the strengthened review process of the NPT to keep this in mind when we move to take up the review next year.

The CTBT is, of course, one of a range of measures that we must all undertake. Its imperfections are acknowledged. But the CTBT is a step of critical importance and critical potential. The solid vote of approval in the General Assembly, now endorsed by the signatures and the ratification to which I have referred, sends out a powerful political message.

There is very wide support, from Governments and citizens alike, for the position that nuclear testing should never again to be conducted anywhere in the world. Samoa joins the call to all States for the most serious consideration to be given to bringing the Treaty into force. Meanwhile, we, as Treaty signatories, expect all States to be under the obligation, whether or not the Treaty is in force, to stand by the purpose, as well as the spirit of the Treaty and not to act in a manner likely to undermine the Treaty. We would like to think that all Treaty signatories will act in good faith in full support of the CTBT.

Samoa believes that the nuclear-weapon States have a primary responsibility for the fulfilment of the CTBT and its twin objectives of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We continue to look to these States to pursue further negotiations, among themselves and in international forums, to deepen their commitments by further reducing their nuclear-weapon arsenals and their reliance on them for security.

The CTBT is only one line of pursuit. There is much more that calls for our joint effort and attention in our quest for a nuclear-free world. My own country places considerable faith in the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the vital role they play in the disarmament process. We note with satisfaction the almost complete regional adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the establishment of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in South-East Asia and Africa, with the signing, respectively, of the Bangkok and Pelindaba Treaties.

There has also been progress in our region, with the recent accession of two regional parties to the Treaty of Rarotonga, and the signature by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America of the Protocols to the Treaty, which established the Nuclear Free Zone in the South Pacific. All five nuclear Powers are now parties to the Treaty of Rarotonga.

As other speakers in the Committee have said, the signing of the Bangkok and Pelindaba Treaties, when taken together with the treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga and the Antarctic Treaty, means that the entire southern hemisphere is now free from the development, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer or use of nuclear weapons. That is why my country fully supports the initiative taken by Brazil aimed at developing links and enhancing cooperation among southern hemisphere nuclear-weapon-free zones. We know from the experience of a meeting last year in New York of the States Parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga how important such links are and we believe that more formal and useful mechanisms of cooperation could be developed among all Treaty areas.

Today, the international community is united, perhaps more than at any other time, in recognizing as a fundamental goal the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. Samoa is deeply committed to this goal, and we, together with Members of the United Nations and members of civil society, will continue to work for its achievement.

In this respect, my Government is greatly encouraged by the Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the question of the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. The Court ruled that there could be no doubt that humanitarian law and principles apply to nuclear weapons. These are principles reflected in the Hague and Geneva Conventions and constitute what the Court terms

> "intransgressible principles of international customary law". (*International Court of Justice General List No. 95, para. 79*)

Of particular importance is the recognition by the Court of the continuing existence and applicability of the Martens Clause, which affirms that the principles and rules of humanitarian law apply to nuclear weapons.

We also draw attention to the Court's acceptance and appreciation of the full recognition of article VI of the NPT and the obligation to negotiate in good faith on nuclear disarmament. As the Court has put it, the obligation is not merely one of conduct but is designed

> "to achieve a precise result — nuclear disarmament in all its aspects — by adopting a particular course of conduct, namely, the pursuit of negotiations on the matter in good faith". (*ibid., para. 99*)

This objective is described by the Court as being

> "of vital importance to the whole of the international community today". (*ibid., para. 103*)

We agree most respectfully.

These findings and conclusions of the Court are of the highest significance and persuasiveness. They provide a new and, in our view, correct perspective on the commitment to disarmament.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Hungary to make a statement in his capacity as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention.

Mr. Tóth (Hungary) Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention: At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the important office of Chairman of this Committee.

The 1994 Special Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, agreed to establish an Ad Hoc Group open to all States Parties to consider appropriate measures, including possible verification measures, and draft proposals to strengthen the Convention. In September 1996, the Ad Hoc Group held its fifth session and, in the light of the forthcoming Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention, it decided to inform the Review Conference of the progress it has made in fulfilling its mandate. In my capacity as

Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group, I should like to highlight some of the main points of the report.

In the course of the four substantive sessions held since its establishment, the Ad Hoc Group has been considering appropriate measures, including possible verification measures, to strengthen the Convention, to be included, as appropriate, in a legally binding instrument to be submitted for the consideration of the States Parties. In this context, the Ad Hoc Group has, *inter alia*, been considering definitions of terms and objective criteria, such as lists of bacteriological agents and toxins and their threshold quantities, as well as equipment and types of activities, where relevant for specific measures designed to strengthen the Convention; and the incorporation into the regime, as appropriate, of existing and further enhanced confidence-building and transparency measures.

The Ad Hoc Group also considered a system of measures to promote compliance with the Convention, including, as appropriate, measures identified, examined and evaluated in the report of the Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts to Identify and Examine Possible Verification Measures from a Scientific and Technical Standpoint (VEREX). Such measures should apply to all relevant facilities and activities, be reliable, cost effective, non-discriminatory and as non-intrusive as possible and consistent with the effective implementation of the system, and should not lead to abuse. It has also been considering specific measures designed to ensure the effective and full implementation of article X that also avoid any restrictions incompatible with the obligations undertaken under the Convention, noting that the provisions of the Convention should not be used to impose restrictions and/or limitations on the transfer, for purposes consistent with the objectives and the provisions of the Convention, of scientific knowledge, technology, equipment and materials.

Based upon the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group, measures should be formulated and implemented in a manner designed to protect sensitive commercial proprietary information and legitimate national security needs and to avoid any negative impact on scientific research, international cooperation and industrial development. In accordance with the mandate, the regime would include, *inter alia*, potential verification measures, as well as agreed procedures and mechanisms for their efficient implementation and measures for the investigation of alleged use.

Where relevant, consideration of those issues by the Ad Hoc Group has sought to build on the considerable body of technical work connected with strengthening the regime of the Biological Weapons Convention undertaken in 1992 and 1993 by the Ad Hoc Group of Technical Experts.

The Ad Hoc Group has made significant progress towards fulfilling the mandate given by the 1994 Special Conference, *inter alia*, by identifying a preliminary framework and elaborating potential basic elements of a legally binding instrument to strengthen the Convention. The results of the discussions are reflected by the Friends of the Chair in papers annexed to the report of the Ad Hoc Group. Those papers are without prejudice to the positions of delegations on the issues under consideration in the Ad Hoc Group and do not imply agreement on the scope or content of the papers.

Summaries on compliance measures reflect the range of discussion that has occurred in the Ad Hoc Group, covering declarations and investigations to address a non-compliance concern, including facility and field investigations, as well as other visits. Naturally, all elements of the summaries require further consideration.

On the question of the definition of terms and objective criteria, a number of terms have been identified as requiring definition. Possible criteria and lists for human, animal and plant pathogens were discussed. The Group held preliminary discussions on a list of key equipment and on the potential role of threshold quantities for specific measures designed to strengthen the Convention.

In the area of confidence-building and transparency measures, surveillance of publications and legislation, data on transfers and transfer requests and on production, multilateral information sharing, exchange visits and confidence-building visits have been discussed as potential voluntary and non-mandatory measures that could be included, as appropriate, in a legally binding instrument. The Group has also considered possible elements for structured discussions on scientific and technical cooperation under article X of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Notwithstanding the progress that I have outlined, the Ad Hoc Group was not able to complete its work or submit its report, which includes a draft of the future legally binding instrument, to the States Parties for consideration at the Fourth Review Conference. In this context, it is noted that the cumulative period allocated to substantive negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group was eight weeks. In order to fulfil its mandate, the Ad Hoc Group has decided to intensify its work with a view to completing it as soon as

possible before the commencement of the Fifth Review Conference and to submit its report, which will be adopted by consensus, to be considered by the States Parties at a special conference.

In its future work, the Ad Hoc Group will build upon materials contained in the papers of the Friends of the Chair, which are attached to its recent report and to those of previous sessions.

In order to intensify its work, the Ad Hoc Group decided to hold three three-week sessions over the next 12 months. I encourage and invite States Parties that have not yet done so to join the negotiations in the light of their anticipated intensification. I express the hope that the Ad Hoc Group's further progress in fulfilling its mandate will be characterized by the same degree of constructive cooperation that has been shown to date.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for today.

I call on the representative of South Africa to make a statement.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): It is an honour for me to inform the Committee of a statement on joint positions reached between South Africa and Sweden on disarmament, following ministerial talks in Cape Town today, 17 October 1996. The statement, which is based on the commitment of South Africa and Sweden to achieving a world free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and to addressing the proliferation of conventional weapons covered, *inter alia*, the following issues. It welcomed the adoption and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and noted our common belief that further steps are needed in the programme to bring the world closer to the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. It underlined the importance of the early commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The statement noted the great importance that we attach to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the strengthened review process. It emphasized the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones and welcomed the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. It welcomed the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and declared our support for the work to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. We expressed our concern at the destabilizing build-up of conventional weapons and our commitment to working together to ensure that this important matter receives the necessary attention and priority in the various disarmament forums.

The statement declared that we attach the utmost importance to a comprehensive prohibition on all anti-personnel landmines. Finally, it declared our commitment to reinforcing international cooperation and national capacities for mine-clearance. It is our intention to circulate the full text of the statement to members of the Committee at a later date.

The Chairman: I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to exercise my right of reply to the statement of the representative of South Korea. I again declare that the South Korean authorities are not qualified to talk about nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula. The South Korean authorities are the traitors to the nation who introduced nuclear weapons from the United States to the living ground of our nation. My delegation was surprised at the ignorance of the South Korean representative with regard to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Perhaps he is feigning ignorance.

The Agreed Framework between Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States clearly stipulates at what stage we are to fulfil certain obligations according to the agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). But the Agreed Framework has still not been implemented. We are, however, cooperating eagerly and actively with the IAEA, in accordance with the agreement. In fact, we are overdoing it.

Perhaps the South Korean representative is ignorant of the Agreed Framework because South Korea is not qualified to participate in the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. It would be better for the South Korean representative to educate himself with regard to the Agreed Framework.

As for the North-South Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, we have found out that the settlement of the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States is a prerequisite, because South Korea, the colony, has no say with regard to the nuclear weapons of the suzerain State, the United States. When the nuclear issue is settled between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

and the United States, the North-South Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will be implemented automatically and smoothly.

Mr. Paek (Republic of Korea): Instead of responding point by point to the remarks of the representative of North Korea, let me set the record straight be further explaining our position on North Korea's non-compliance with the safeguard agreement which it freely entered into with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

North Korea has again used the Geneva Agreed Framework as an excuse for non-compliance with the safeguard agreement under the NPT. Its excuse is absurd and unacceptable to all signatories to the NPT. The Agreed Framework is a bilateral arrangement signed with the United States, just as the South-North Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was signed between the two Koreas. North Korea, of course, has bilateral legal obligations to abide by both agreements. We have no doubt that, if fully implemented, these bilateral agreements would constitute an important supplement to the global non-proliferation regime, which could contribute to the ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

It must be pointed out that we are dealing here with the North Korean issue in the multilateral context, with respect to North Korea's multilateral obligation towards all Parties to the NPT to comply with the safeguard agreement. For the sake of the credibility and integrity of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the IAEA safeguards system, it is most appropriate for the United Nations, as an Organization with global responsibilities and competence, to draw attention to the only case in the world of continuing non-compliance with the safeguards obligation.

We reiterate our position that bilateral agreements cannot replace, supersede or detract from North Korea's multilateral obligations to all Parties to the NPT. It is in this context that we have repeatedly urged North Korea promptly to enter into full compliance with its safeguards obligations under the NPT, in addition to its compliance with the Agreed Framework and the South-North Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The representative of South Korea once again exposed his ignorance. The Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) warmly welcomed the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. The Agreed Framework clearly stipulates what we must do in accordance with the IAEA agreement. Again, I would like to advise the South Korean authorities to refrain from trying to poke their nose into the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, which we are trying to resolve with the United States.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.7

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first session

First Committee

7th Meeting
Friday, 18 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of the First Committee. Your professional experience and personal qualities will ensure that our work will achieve positive and concrete results. I assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full cooperation. Your election is a sign that the international community recognizes the efforts and contributions that your country, Belarus, has made to disarmament and to security throughout the world and, in particular, in Central Europe. I should like also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for his skilful guidance of our Committee's work during its previous session.

The Second World War gave rise to a call for a new system of collective security and policies to promote peace and cooperation among the peoples of the world. Thus was born the United Nations. However, the explosion of the atom bomb, before the Charter of this Organization had entered into force, altered the foundation on which this system of international relations was built. Until the end of the cold war, nuclear weapons were at the heart of power politics, affecting the principle of legal equality among States and giving rise to the arms race.

Changes in international relations are beginning to bear fruit in various areas. My delegation is pleased that during the past year the international community has taken two essential steps to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons. One was the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, and the other the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These are both historic documents that establish commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The adoption of the Treaty of Bangkok, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, was equally encouraging. This instrument of great legal and political importance is a part of the efforts under way in other regions. The treaties of Tlateloco for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rarotonga for the South Pacific, Pelindaba for Africa, and Bangkok for South-East Asia — being almost in full effect — together with the Antarctic Treaty, reinforce the concept of the nuclear-weapon-free zone. Internationally recognized and established on the basis of freely entered into arrangements, these zones contribute to world and regional peace and security. We believe that the discussions and work of this Committee should take these positive developments into account and reflect them in the Committee's resolutions. In this context, my delegation supports the initiative of Brazil to ensure that the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This would have a positive effect on tension-prone regions such as the Middle East, and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime.

Similarly, we welcome the direct negotiations on nuclear disarmament held in the context of the Strategic

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Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I and SALT II). We hope for the resumption of multilateral negotiations on making progress towards a convention banning the production of fissile material. We believe that the complete and definitive elimination of nuclear weapons is now more attainable and constitutes a priority for the international community. In this conviction, my country supports the programme of gradual nuclear disarmament proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement and other neutral States to the Conference on Disarmament, which will be submitted to this Committee.

The constructive progress we are witnessing in the area of nuclear disarmament should be accompanied by concrete measures with regard to conventional weapons. The indiscriminate use of such weapons and the lack of established legal systems governing their prohibition, limitation and trading, give conventional weapons a devastating and pernicious influence.

The continued manufacture and laying of landmines is also of concern. This situation calls for urgent legal and humanitarian measures to establish a comprehensive global legal system banning all kinds of anti-personnel mines and to allay the pain and suffering caused to innocent civilians by the mines, which impede the social and economic activities of these peoples. My country will continue this year to cosponsor the draft resolution calling on States to adopt an international agreement banning the use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

In the area of weapons of mass destruction, we hope that the countries with the largest stocks of chemical weapons will ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, allowing that legal instrument to enter into force and encouraging its universal adherence.

Dialogue and multilateral negotiation have made it possible for us to codify substantive rules binding on our States in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. For this reason, Bolivia believes that peace and international security, as well as cooperation for social and economic development of peoples, should be approached from a global perspective and with a sense of shared responsibility. Comprehensive approaches must be supplemented by sustained regional efforts. In this connection, we would like to encourage the formulation of regional disarmament plans, as they can play a role in collective security and would promote confidence-building measures, which would in turn help eliminate distrust among countries in a region.

We call for a genuine democratization of international relations and for the earmarking of greater resources for policies promoting peace and development. It seems paradoxical, however, to promote globalization and interdependence in various areas of human activity, particularly in the economic and trade spheres, while our conceptions of security and military activities continue to have a negative impact on relations of cooperation and mutual respect.

The arms race, fuelled by increasing ideological differences, became an obstacle to the development of a better world. This was the situation during most of the first 50 years of our Organization's life. With the end of the cold war, the global balance of power has changed. For that reason, we must encourage, with renewed faith and conviction, the beginning of a new race, this time for disarmament. This could be the most important legacy the end of this century could leave to the generations of the next millennium.

Mr. Sannikau (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): It gives me particular pleasure, Sir, to welcome a representative of my country as Chairman of the First Committee. Your election to this authoritative post is proof of the international recognition of Belarus' contribution to the promotion of international security and disarmament. While associating myself with other congratulations made to you, allow me to assure, through you, all delegations that Belarus intends constructively to approach all the items on the First Committee's agenda in order to facilitate the achievement of consensus decisions, with the goal of meeting the requirements of the disarmament process in all its aspects.

Aware of the vital need to develop and implement international mechanisms for strengthening security that would also effectively ensure national security, the Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the United Nations role as a guarantor of the efficiency and multilateral character of such mechanisms. The opening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature was a major event which preceded the current session of the General Assembly and will have an impact on the First Committee's deliberations this year. The Foreign Minister of my country signed the Treaty on the very first day: 24 September 1996. Here I should like to underscore Belarus' fully-fledged involvement in finalizing the work on the Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament. It is in that capacity that we intend to bring to the Conference on Disarmament, the authoritative negotiating body, our experience — that of a young State that has,

nonetheless, resolved complex security and disarmament issues.

The Conference on Disarmament today is faced with the task of consolidating and further developing the nuclear-disarmament process. High priorities in this area include the early commencement of negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons, and the speedy drafting of an internationally binding instrument on both negative and positive security assurances from nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States regarding the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The first step in that direction was taken by the five nuclear Powers in their statements on security guarantees to the non-nuclear-weapon States in the context of the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 984 (1995). Consistent efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce global nuclear armaments are an important prerequisite to enhancing the positive impact and potential of all endeavours to that end.

The creation of nuclear weapon-free zones is making a significant contribution to strengthening peace and security. With the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty and the accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the corresponding protocols, the entire southern hemisphere is becoming a unified nuclear-weapon-free zone. The presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 12 April last in connection with the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty is a positive signal from the United Nations body that has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That statement encourages the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and urges the countries of the northern hemisphere to take similar steps. Under the circumstances, as was noted by the head of my delegation in his statement during the general debate in plenary:

> "we consider it illogical for Europe to remain the only continent where no practical steps have been taken in this direction." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 18th meeting, p. 19)*

Belarus, Kazakstan and Ukraine, which until recently had 3,400 nuclear missiles stationed on their territory, are making an important contribution — highly commended by the international community — to the process of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The last strategic nuclear missiles will be removed from the territory of Belarus by the end of this year, thus freeing the entire area of Central and Eastern Europe from this type of weapons.

Given the new realities in the ever-evolving architecture of European security, an important and relevant initiative, which previous speakers have referred to, was that taken by the President of Belarus to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in the European region. The aims of creating such a space could be formulated as follows: to contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament; to avoid the recurrence of nuclear confrontation in Europe; to introduce a unifying element of stability and security for the countries of the region, which have different perspectives on the structure of pan-European security systems; to consolidate the existing commitments of States of the region to become non-nuclear-weapon States; to prevent the possibility of renewed proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region; and to build confidence among the States of the region. The term that we have selected — "space" — is intended to make the idea of nuclear-weapon-free status in the centre of Europe flexible and to invite potential participants and interested States to discuss the foundations for its realization.

We believe that the nuclear-weapon-free space could be based on a coherent and harmonious combination of legal and political, unilateral and multilateral commitments by States. The parties to the space could include both our closest neighbours, which see membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the solution to their security problems, as well as those countries with nuclear-weapon-free traditions and neutral States. The NATO States that have a specific stand on the alliance's nuclear weapons might also become part of that space, in one form or another.

Besides measures related to nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon-free space might involve such elements as regional efforts to prevent illicit traffic in fissile materials and to improve the reliability and safety of atomic-energy installations. The nuclear-weapon-free space could also give its participants the option to commit themselves not to take any steps related to conventional weapons or to military activities that might provoke nuclear retaliation.

I should like to emphasize that the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free space cannot be perceived in a simplistic manner, as a measure to counter plans for NATO's expansion. Belarus' initiative is not intended to block anything; rather, it aims to seek solutions in the context of creating a pan-European security system, taking into account the interests of all European countries and security arrangements.

In this context, the proposal to limit the deployment of nuclear weapons outside the borders of the nuclear States is extremely important. We also attach particular significance to the Partnership for Peace, in which Belarus has begun to participate more directly and intends to participate more fully in the future.

It should be noted that delegations have unanimously welcomed the ratification by 64 States, including Belarus, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We ratified the Convention in February 1995 and this July deposited its instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We attach great importance to practical measures to strengthen the regime of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We have presented our proposals on increasing the effectiveness of the Convention at its Review Conferences and are satisfied that our position has been reflected in their final resolutions.

Belarus supports the further development of international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space. Unfortunately, the experience gathered by Belarus' specialists in this sphere remains untapped, awaiting proper application in the framework of international cooperation.

The results of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Review Conference are of great importance for furthering control procedures over conventional arms, and for increased transparency and confidence-building. It is common knowledge that Belarus has come up against serious problems, particularly economic, in fulfilling its obligations under the Treaty. I am very pleased to announce that despite those difficulties and the lack of adequate assistance, the Republic has fulfilled all its obligations on conventional arms reduction under the Treaty. We are looking forward to an early start of negotiations to adapt this Treaty to new realities, so that States parties to the Treaty can sketch out mutually acceptable decisions before the next summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is convened in Lisbon.

The results of the Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects might help recent international efforts. I should like to report, with satisfaction, that we have just been notified that the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus has ratified the Convention's Protocol II on landmines and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. In addition, the moratorium until the end of 1997 on the export of anti-personnel landmines, declared by the President of Belarus, remains in force.

We support the important new item on the agenda of the First Committee on the ecological aspects of disarmament. This issue is particularly topical for countries in which military bases are being closed down and intensive arms reduction and conversion measures are being taken with respect to military production. We have already had the opportunity to express our support for the idea of including provisions on crimes related to causing deliberate and serious damage to the environment in the draft code of crimes against peace and security.

All these and other, similar major initiatives are opening the way to further efforts in micro-disarmament, including those to halt illicit trafficking in small arms, especially in conflict zones. We are contributing to the drafting of recommendations on small arms by taking part in the Panel of Governmental Experts established at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Traditionally, Belarus, along with a host of other countries, supports the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and related systems. This item is on the agenda of the current session. We intend to submit a draft resolution on this item, which we hope will be adopted by consensus.

This year has become a landmark in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation, and the further strengthening of international security. I wish to express our confidence that deliberations in the First Committee and the decisions adopted will help us keep the momentum going. The delegation of Belarus is prepared to contribute in every possible way.

Mr. Kadrakounov (Kyrgyzstan): Mr. Chairman, as this is my first intervention, allow me to congratulate you on your election to preside over the First Committee. We are confident that your wise leadership and the assistance of the other members of the Bureau will advance the work of the Committee this session. Kyrgyzstan wishes to assure you of its whole-hearted support in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

Our Republic is located in Central Asia, in the region that lies at the crossroads of the millennial civilizations linking Asia with Europe. In addition to existing States, this region includes the five newly independent Republics of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Their emergence has created new geo-political realities, which have a number of peculiar features. They all are land-locked countries. Despite its background and civilization, Central Asia is faced with enormous difficulties in its transitional period. A series of political and cultural identities have been imposed and superimposed on each other in the region, the last two being Islam and Marxism. But the main specific feature is that all these Republics are in the process of building a State, and therefore give the highest priority to the issues of peace, security and stability in their domestic and foreign policies, because only with these basic conditions is sustainable economic and social development possible.

Kyrgyzstan, as already mentioned, is located at the very heart of the Eurasian continent, surrounded by countries with nuclear potential, and right between two world-famous nuclear-testing grounds: Semipalatinsk in Kazakstan, which is no longer operational, and Lop Nor in China. All the possible consequences of testing and its by-products were literally falling on the heads of our population and its land, leaving in their wake despair and human tragedy. For these reasons, the Republic's authorities had no doubts about joining either the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). These are truly historic events that have increased the momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

Two other matters remain on the nuclear-arms-control agenda: negotiations on a convention to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices; and further reductions of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their global elimination. It must be pointed out that the conclusion of the CTBT proves the ability of the United Nations to follow through on the promises it made last year at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It also raises expectations that the other two matters I mentioned can be resolved accordingly.

It is widely recognized that the most prevalent menace since the end of the cold war is that posed by civil wars and local and regional conflicts. For our Republic this is a grim reality. Conflicts in the neighbouring countries of Tajikistan and Afghanistan have led to the extreme suffering of their peoples and created new threats to stability in the region, one of the most important of which is illicit trafficking in light weapons. This increasingly global phenomenon has an impact on States' domestic stability and on regional conflicts.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan supports international and regional attempts to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms. It recognizes the need for the close cooperation of Member States to curb trafficking in illicit arms as an effective contribution to the enhancement of regional and international peace and security. We welcome the negotiations under way to devise a framework for conventional arms control and the reduction of armaments into the twenty-first century. It is encouraging that progress has also been made in setting up a new arrangement on export controls for conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies. The significant headway made in these matters shows that arms control is by no means a secondary issue on the security agenda.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the progress achieved in seeking a political solution to the conflict in Nagorny-Karabakh and other conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union — in the Trans-Dniester region, South Ossetia and Abhazia. We agree with the Russian Federation's position that the problem of mine clearance in conflict zones of Commonwealth of Independent States countries needs urgently to be resolved.

We share the view of security experts that the existing security institutions are not fully adequate to meet new challenges and threats. Expectations are high that international security structures such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and others will devote unprecedented levels of human and financial resources to conflict prevention and resolution. Demands are being made that international principles, norms and procedures be adapted to the new situation. Experts stress that today, when international stability no longer depends on negative factors such as mutual deterrence, the primary force for stability and security-building in the post-cold-war era is a cooperation based on the interdependence of national interests.

Although the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone could be considered only a partial step, it would certainly be a helpful contribution to a process that will eventually lead to general nuclear disarmament. In this connection, I should like to draw the attention of representatives to the initiative that has been proposed time and again by the

Heads of State of our country and of the neighbouring Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Only a week ago, our Foreign Minister, speaking before the General Assembly, reiterated this attractive idea in all its aspects.

The pursuit in good faith of this objective testifies to the strong determination of our Government to translate this idea into reality. The events of the last few years show the proposal's relevance and that there is a real opportunity for its implementation. We believe that this sort of arrangement would constitute an important disarmament measure and would enhance the security of the States concerned as well as stability in the region.

Mr. Escovar Salom (Venezuela)(*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. Chairman, allow me at the outset to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside over the work of the Committee. We are certain that given your experience and diplomatic skills, our session will have a successful outcome. You can be assured of my delegation's cooperation. I should like also to extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Venezuela signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, with the same enthusiasm as it did the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water.

All efforts made towards disarmament will enjoy Venezuela's firm and whole-hearted support. We hope that in the coming century humankind will be freed of all atomic weapons and weapons of mass destruction; to this end, we believe that disarmament negotiations must proceed towards that goal throughout the remainder of this century.

Within that context, at the Conference on Disarmament Venezuela supported the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons in three stages, as contained in document CD/1419 of 7 August 1996. The first phase is geared towards the reduction of the nuclear threat and the adoption of measures to ensure nuclear disarmament; the second phase covers the search for ways to reduce nuclear arsenals and promote confidence among States; and the third phase envisages the consolidation of a world free of weapons. In this regard, my delegation believes the CTBT constitutes a step forward in the quest for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and therefore attaches great importance to it and gives it its full support.

Effective and coordinated international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes one of the greatest priorities of the developing countries.

Venezuela is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We are a peaceful nation committed to disarmament, and, accordingly, we firmly support the conclusion of those treaties and warmly welcome the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that the threat or use of nuclear weapons runs counter to the norms of international law. In this regard, Venezuela hopes that the work of the First Committee will contribute substantially to the search for effective solutions aimed at the early conclusion of agreements in this area of disarmament.

Regarding the nuclear-weapon-free zones, my delegation would like to note that it was during the so-called cold war that the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world was established in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This was clear testimony of the political will and peaceful aims of the countries of the region. Today we note with great satisfaction the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in many regions of the world. The treaties of Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and the Antarctic are clear examples of the desire of peoples to be free of the threat of the terrible nuclear nightmare. Venezuela firmly supports the creation of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones and encourages the States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, instruments that are essential to the ban on these weapons. My delegation will support unreservedly all initiatives by the international community to establish such zones throughout the world.

In that context, my delegation would like also to thank the delegation of Brazil for its submission of a draft resolution on the consolidation of the southern hemisphere and its adjacent nuclear-weapon-free areas, to which we attach great importance. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus. Likewise, we call once again on the nuclear-Power States to contribute to this objective and to give assurances to non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of this type of weapon.

My delegation also welcomes with satisfaction the adoption by consensus of the "Guidelines for the international transfer of weapons", an issue that has been

taken up by the Disarmament Commission. We consider that illicit arms trafficking causes great harm to people, incites violence, promotes terrorism, protects drug trafficking and encourages general delinquency, which has a negative impact on the internal security and the socio-economic development of the States affected. It is our understanding that the guidelines adopted constitute a set of principles governing the transfer of weapons, and we hope that they will soon become valid and legally binding norms for all States. For now, they provide important and invaluable guidance for the conduct of nations in this regard, with the goal of preserving international peace and security.

At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution entitled "Measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms", demonstrating the international community's genuine interest in the total elimination of this scourge. That resolution invites Member States to take appropriate and effective measures to seek to ensure that illicit transfers of arms are immediately discontinued, and to provide the Secretary-General with relevant information. Moreover, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing the views expressed by Member States. We believe that this matter must continue to be considered with interest and in a comprehensive manner, as has been the case to date. Furthermore, my delegation hopes that the First Committee will again reach a consensus on this matter, as it did last year.

The serious problem of anti-personnel landmines has become one of the main priorities in the area of disarmament. The number of people killed, maimed or injured by this concealed weapon increases every day among the civilian population; its main victims are field workers, women and children, plunging thousands of families into mourning, desolation and sorrow. In addition, these devices cause serious damage to the economies of the countries in which they are planted.

Venezuela welcomes with satisfaction the decision of those States that have declared a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines. At the same time, however, it considers that a complete ban on the production, export, transfer and stockpiling of these weapons would be the definitive solution to the problem of those explosive devices, which are excessively injurious and have indiscriminate effects.

Another aspect that interests my delegation is the relationship between disarmament and development. In May of this year, the Non-Aligned Movement addressed a communication to the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, in his capacity as host of the summit meeting of the seven major industrialized countries (Group of 7), expressing the need for those countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of the gross national product to aid and cooperation for development for the least-developed countries, as set out in the Programme of Action of the Copenhagen World Social Summit. My delegation considers that the Group of Seven countries could reach this percentage by freeing the resources derived from the implementation of the agreements on disarmament and arms limitation.

Venezuela attaches special importance to regional disarmament. Recently, several regional initiatives have been taken to strengthen regional and international peace and security through the convening of meetings and other mechanisms designed to promote confidence-building measures, such as the Hemispheric Conference on Confidence Building Measures, held in Argentina in 1994; the Conference on Security and Confidence-Building Measures, held in Chile in 1995; and the summit meetings of Defence Ministers of the Hemisphere, one of which was held in Virginia in June 1995, and the other of which was held in Bariloche, Argentina, during the first week of this month. Other meetings held in this regard were the dialogue between the Rio Group and the European Union on confidence-building measures, held in São Paolo, Brazil, in April 1995; and the Central American demining programme, sponsored by the Special Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States. My country has participated in all these efforts and is a firm supporter of the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means.

As for the meeting of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we have noted with great satisfaction its inclusion in the agenda of the most recent meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. We have also noted the achievements made through the exchange of views on the matter, which we appreciate as a valuable contribution that will serve as a future basis for negotiations on this item.

In the light of existing realities in the disarmament process, in which international instruments are still under discussion and various questions are under negotiation, my delegation recommends allocating more time for concrete measures to be implemented in this area and suggests that it would be convenient to postpone the date of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament to a later time, perhaps until the year 2000.

Venezuela supports the establishment of norms or guidelines that are acceptable to Member States for governing international transfers of high technology with military applications. It also encourages the intensification of efforts to use science and technology for disarmament purposes and supports the use of that technology for the maintenance of international peace and security. My delegation believes that efforts should be intensified to arrive at a clear and concerted definition on this issue.

Within the context of education on disarmament, we are concerned by the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Secretary-General notes with deep regret that it has been necessary to suspend the activities of the Lima Centre for financial reasons until further notice. We must overcome this situation, in keeping with the United Nations concept that there can be no peace without development and no development without peace. The Disarmament Centres constitute fertile ground for the promotion of regional and international peace and security. For this reason, Venezuela joins in the appeal to Member States and to international organizations and foundations to make substantial contributions that will permit the early resumption of the Lima Centre's activities.

Mr. Yativ (Israel): I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. It is a well-deserved acknowledgment of your skills and competence. I can assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation in steering the deliberations of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

The Government and the people of Israel have always been united in the quest for peace with all their neighbours. The new Government is also firmly committed to continue with the ongoing efforts on the road to peace. The Madrid Conference has established the framework of the peacemaking process in both its bilateral and multilateral channels. The pillars of this process are the peace treaties between Israel and its immediate neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. The dialogue with the Palestinians has resumed in continuous efforts designed to resolve the differences between both sides and to implement the agreements.

Progress is being achieved. It is also one of the immediate goals of this Government to resume the dialogue with Syria as an important component of peace in our region. This policy was recently reiterated by Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. David Levy, before the General Assembly:

> "I wish solemnly to reaffirm Israel's irreversible commitment and determination to pursue the path of peace." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary meetings, 20th meeting, p. 13*)

Israel has ascribed significant importance to issues of regional security and arms control as an integral component of the peacemaking efforts in the Middle East. Given the volatility of our region, addressing such issues requires utmost caution and careful consideration. Today more than ever before it is abundantly clear that security, as both a regional and national goal, cannot be achieved without a total and unequivocal renunciation of violence as a political means. Israel's Foreign Minister, in his statement before the General Assembiy, also said that

> "security is neither an obsession nor a blind belief. It touches upon our very existence in a region where, unfortunately, threats and instability still rage. Security must be the cornerstone in the architecture of peace. It cannot, under any circumstances, tag along behind a process in which terrorism and violence have not yet spoken their last word." (*supra, p. 83*)

Likewise, it is important to stress once again that regional security problems can be settled only among the States of the region. Israel therefore supported the establishment of the Working Group on regional security and arms control as a regional forum within the peace process to complement the bilateral talks by seeking cooperative responses to security problems. It is Israel's fervent hope that this regional framework will be reconvened in order to address, with the active participation of all States of the Middle East, the regional security concerns of our region.

The concept of regionality is indeed the backbone of Israel's approach to issues of regional security and arms control. Israel's belief in this concept derives from one of the basic tenets of its foreign policy: the recognition that such problems can be addressed only by direct negotiations. This approach proved itself time and again, and was reiterated before the General Assembly by Israel's Foreign Minister, who said:

> "The advantage of this regional approach is that it is based on direct negotiations between the States of the region. The first stage is to build confidence, and thereafter, we must put arms

control and disarmament mechanisms into place." (*supra, p. 94*)

These advantages outweigh the global approach which cannot provide a response to the unique security problems in general and of Israel in particular.

Regionality is one of the principles of Israel's policy on the nuclear issue, including the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. With your permission, Sir, I wish to elaborate on the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, in both its global and regional aspects. The issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones has recently been the subject of much debate. Before outlining Israel's position on the matter, I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that as early as 1974, an Ad Hoc Group of Qualified Governmental Experts under the auspices of the Conference on Disarmament had prepared a comprehensive study on the question of nuclear-weapon-free-zones that was subsequently submitted to the General Assembly. It would be pertinent to quote from that report, especially on the issue of the relevance of regional considerations in the context of the principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The report states:

> "Conditions in which nuclear-weapon-free zones might be viable and might enhance security are bound to differ considerably from region to region. The security considerations and perceptions of States ... vary, and it is not possible or realistic, a priori, to set out precise guidelines for the creation of zones, since it is for Governments themselves to decide on their own security requirements and to determine their immediate and long-term national interests." (*CCD/467, chapter III, para. 9*)

Indeed, a study of the basic principles that guided the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions indicate that all regional parties share a number of common interests. Whether in Latin America, the Pacific region or in Africa, the respective regional States enjoyed common denominators that constituted absolute prerequisites for the creation of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. The conditions that prevailed prior to the establishment of the zones included, *inter alia*, peaceful relations and mutual confidence, economic cooperation and a general belief in the enhancement of common interests through institutional regional frameworks. The urge to embark on such an endeavour was, in all cases, a result of regional initiative and direct negotiations culminating in a consensus. Even then a long and arduous process was required to attain the goal of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Turning to the Middle East, the situation is, unfortunately, different. At this time, several regional States are still in a formal state of war with Israel. Moreover, some regional States still refuse to forswear war as a means of settling disputes and are attempting, directly or indirectly, to impede the peace process, including by means of terror. Hence, it is evident that at the present time, many of the prerequisites for meaningful discussions on arms control in the Middle East, including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, are still missing.

Therefore, Israel's policy on the nuclear issue in the region of the Middle East is based on the following principles, the first of which is comprehensiveness. The nuclear issue should be dealt with in the full context of the peace process and of all security problems, conventional and non-conventional.

Secondly, as regards a regional framework, nuclear non-proliferation will be achieved only through the establishment, in due course, of a mutually verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Thirdly, a step-by-step approach will be required. Practicality dictates beginning the process with confidence- and security-building measures, establishing relations of peace and reconciliation among all States and peoples of the region, and, in due course, complementing the process by dealing with conventional and non-conventional arms control, where priorities are assigned to systems that experience has proven to be destructive and destabilizing.

Fourthly, as regards the primacy of the peace process, negotiations on all issues concerning the security of the region must take place in a free and direct way, within the framework of the peace process, encompassing all States in the region.

Israel believes that the day will come when conditions in our area will be conducive to direct discussions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Until such time, the notion that has to be inculcated is that in the process of peacemaking no issue can be settled in isolation, but that progress in one area, particularly that of political accommodation, can lead to progress in other areas as well.

In his report of 25 October 1993, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East (A/48/399), the Secretary-General said that

> "a nuclear-weapon-free zone cannot be conceived of or implemented in a political vacuum, separate from the process of mutual reconciliation." *(A/48/399, para. 22)*

Israel supports this concept *in toto* and therefore believes that a credible nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East can only set the seal on a durable peace; it cannot possibly precede it. Any premature attempt to discuss the establishment of such a zone or to apply an agenda that does not reflect the reality of the region is premature and is bound to fail. The right approach, therefore, must be to study and promote peaceful relations as a prerequisite for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Notwithstanding its concept of regionality, Israel has manifested a continuing openness towards addressing issues of arms control in general. Israel believes that, where appropriate, global arrangements can complement regional agreements. In accordance with this approach, we have been engaged in discussions and negotiations on various subjects of arms control in New York, Geneva and elsewhere. In this regard, I wish to enumerate several examples.

First, Israel has reiterated on numerous occasions its support for the banning of nuclear-test explosions. Consequently, Israel took an active role in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiating process at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Although the CTBT text does not satisfactorily address some of our major concerns, we supported the final text, cosponsored the General Assembly resolution adopting the text, and were among the first countries to sign the Treaty.

Israel attaches great importance to the attitude of its regional neighbours. Their decision to adhere to the Treaty will play a supportive role at the regional level and will contribute to peace and security in the Middle East. Furthermore, in considering CTBT ratification Israel will take into account, *inter alia*, developments in our region, including the adherence to the Treaty by key States from our region. We therefore call upon all States that have not yet done so to join in making the CTBT a truly universal Treaty, ending all nuclear explosions.

A second example is Israel's position on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed To Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) and on anti-personnel landmines. Israel supports the international effort being made to resolve the problem of the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines, which results in casualties, mostly of innocent and defenceless civilians, United Nations peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid personnel. In March 1995, Israel ratified the CCW, participated in the Review Conference that amended Protocol II of the Convention, and is currently reviewing that revised landmines Protocol. Israel supports the efforts being made to extend the accession of the CCW to as many States as possible, particularly in the Middle East.

Israel opposes the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines and, accordingly, adopted in 1994, a unilateral moratorium prohibiting their export. That moratorium was recently extended for an additional three years. However, due to Israel's unique situation in the Middle East, which involves the ongoing threat of hostilities and terrorist activities along the border, Israel is obliged to maintain its capability to use anti-personnel landmines for self-defence in general, and along the borders in particular. Such a use of anti-personnel landmines is in accordance with the requirements of the Convention.

Hence, Israel is unable at this juncture to commit itself to a complete ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines, until alternative and effective measures are available to ensure the protection of its security forces operating in regions still facing armed conflicts and of civilians facing a daily threat to their lives. At the same time, Israel supports a gradual process in which each State will undertake to cease proliferation of anti-personnel landmines, accept restrictions on their possible use and, once circumstances permit, ban their production.

Thirdly, regarding transparency in armaments, Israel was among the first countries to support the resolution on the establishment of the Register of Conventional Arms that was introduced in this Committee. Israel was also among the first to send regularly its reports to the Register in compliance with the relevant resolution. It is unfortunate that Israel is the only State in our region that has consistently done so.

The Secretary-General once described the Register as a "cooperative exercise in confidence-building". Indeed, the Register is certainly an important instrument in a long process that aims to achieve the implementation of global confidence-building measures. However, transparency in armaments cannot achieve its goals unless all countries fulfil their obligations by complying with the prescribed requirements. This factor applies particularly to our own region, where States still refrain from joining the Register.

It is our view that until regional participation in the Register is enhanced, further development or expansion of the Register would be premature.

Fourthly, Israel has consistently argued that the abolishment of chemical weapons and the creation of a region free from chemical weapons is important to the consolidation of the peace process and the stability of the region. Hence, Israel has consistently played a constructive and positive role in regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Israel was among the original signatories of that Convention in January 1993 in Paris. It took this stand in the hope that more States in the region would accede to the Convention. This did not happen, and, unfortunately, several Middle Eastern States continue to oppose the CWC while arming themselves with chemical weapons. Israel will have to take this into account when the ratification of the Convention comes up for consideration.

I wish to conclude by saying that it is Israel's desire to continue on the road to peace for the benefit of all States in the region. There is no substitute for this process or for its modalities: first and foremost, direct negotiations between the parties concerned. We call upon the international community to give this process its unqualified understanding and support so that the attainment of the long-coveted goal of peace and reconciliation in our region will be realized in this generation.

Ms. Ghose (India): Please accept our congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that the deliberations of the First Committee will function smoothly and successfully under your wise guidance. May I also convey our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I should like also to express my delegation's deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia.

The disarmament and international security scenario appears to us today to be one of shadows and light. There is uncertainty and instability in the global scene, which we need to recognize. A dispassionate and realistic appraisal of where we, the international community, are today would reveal the insecurities, the distrust, and, most troubling, an unremitting and seemingly reasonable pressure towards the establishment of a permanently and unequally divided international security regime. Let me elaborate. The Chemical Weapons Convention, which all of us negotiated intensively and in good faith for over a decade, is about to come into force — without the ratification of the Treaty by countries that have declared possession of these weapons. While we have noted the assurances of one of those States to soon move on this matter, the fact — the reality — remains that chemical weapons are banned for those that do not have them, leaving those that do, and in whose interests the Treaty was tailored, outside the Treaty's control.

We are making some progress, it is true, in strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). But although so many countries are parties to this Convention, there still exist, within the membership of the States parties, select and exclusive groups that unilaterally determine — ostensibly in the name of, again, non-proliferation and export control — the countries among which trade in these fearsome agents and technologies may take place, even though other States have accepted the obligations of the Convention.

And then, of course, we have the most unequal of regimes in the area of weapons of mass destruction: the area of nuclear weapons. Is it not strange that we can ban through conventions chemical and biological weapons, but we must not even talk of a convention to ban nuclear weapons, leave alone negotiate one? Is it not even more strange that some countries assert, with an absolute emphasis that will not be questioned, their right to possess, use and threaten to use these monstrous weapons in the interest of their security and the security of their allies — those under their nuclear umbrella — while insisting that the rest of us do not have that right? Should security interests not be of equal importance to us? That "logic", if one may so term this convoluted reasoning, led inevitably, and in an unorthodox manner to which we have become accustomed, to the indefinite extension of a discriminatory Treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), last year, making permanent the inequality. It was said then that there was a matching bargain on nuclear disarmament, but we all know that this was not borne out during the negotiations of the so-called comprehensive Treaty banning nuclear testing.

Today we hear the same voices urging the merits of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials. We have been warned of the so-called dangers of linkage with nuclear disarmament, the deep pit into which we must not fall. Yet if this treaty is not a disarmament step — if it does not halt the production and manufacture of nuclear weapons totally and in a non-discriminatory way — all we would get is the reinforcement of the trend that would preserve nuclear hegemony in the hands of a few uncontrolled States and of their allies who benefit from, or whose security is dependent on, the weapons of the nuclear-weapon State.

Outside this shadowy world of partial, unequal treaties, we find the situation equally grim. Bilateral treaties are not ratified, and there appears to be no prospect of a new round of negotiations to move towards elimination of nuclear weapons. There are no indications that the other nuclear-weapon States are even willing to join this process in the foreseeable future. India has, since the early 1950s, called for a complete cessation of nuclear testing and for a prohibition on the use of fissionable material for weapons. We have, however, above all called for the prohibition and elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. We did not call for a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for environmental reasons, but to halt the development of nuclear weapons and the nuclear arms race; our call for a ban on the production of fissile material was made at a time when the materials were in short supply and were fuelling the build-up of nuclear arsenals. Our objective has, however, remained consistent with the total elimination of nuclear weapons, not the creation of an unequal world.

We are aware that there continues to be a refusal by the nuclear-weapon States to engage in any meaningful discussions on the elimination of these weapons. The continued retention of these weapons by a few States which insist that they are essential to their security and that of their allies yet deny that same right to others has led to a situation in which the shadows become a smoke screen, a situation that is not only discriminatory but dangerously unstable. We view this situation with apprehension. We urge our colleagues here to take a closer look at the situation in the clear light of day. This is not a situation that can, or indeed should, be viewed with any sense of self-satisfaction. Nuclear weapons are still in existence. They are still being tested, improved and modernized. Our security and the security of the entire world remains at risk.

Yet between the shadows there is light. This week speaker after speaker has called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Many have drawn attention to the programme of action, proposed by a large number of members of the Conference on Disarmament, to eliminate nuclear weapons in a phased, time-bound programme. Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, representing the majority of the Members of the United Nations, have called for immediate commencement of negotiations towards that end. International non-governmental organizations, including the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, have pointed to "the inconsistency and hypocrisy" of the position of the nuclear-weapon States, which have been

> "conspicuously reluctant to participate in the development of a comprehensive framework"

through which the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons could be effectively pursued. The Pugwash Conferences urges in its annual statement this year that nations make

> "an immediate and unequivocal commitment to the negotiation and conclusion of a convention on the elimination of nuclear weapons and to begin working on it".

Another international group, the Canberra Commission, whose findings we will examine in detail after their presentation to the General Assembly and to the Conference on Disarmament, has also pointed out that the nuclear-weapon States should

> "make an unequivocal and demonstrated commitment to shrink and ultimately eliminate their nuclear arsenals".

That Commission, too, has examined a new treaty option, and while electing not to fix a precise time-frame, has expressed its support of the

> "basic importance of agreed targets and guidelines which would drive the process inexorably towards the ultimate objective of final elimination, at the earliest possible time".

Above all, we have received the unanimous Judgment of the International Court of Justice that there exists the obligation not only to begin but also to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective control. This Judgment states unequivocally that negotiations must begin and conclude — that is, the negotiations must be comprehensive and verifiable, and, most importantly, the process must not be open-ended, but finite and time-bound.

This demand will not die. This is the voice and expectation of the entire international community, non-governmental organizations and the International Court of Justice. It is a demand that must be met.

The next step, therefore, is obvious. It cannot and must not be another partial convention — inequality and discrimination masquerading as that which is all that is achievable. With 27 other countries that are members of the Conference on Disarmament, India has supported a phased,

step-by-step approach that would lead, within a specific time-frame, to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Within this phased programme, however, we feel that the time has come to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention and on working on a verification system for a nuclear-weapon-free world. We will be proposing once again a resolution promoting a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. This would, we believe, be subsumed under the nuclear weapons convention once the process of negotiations had begun.

A step-by-step process can only be meaningful if it is part of a comprehensive framework, otherwise there is a constant danger of each step's being the last. The entire route to the elimination of nuclear weapons, including the stages, should be charted out and put into reasonable but finite time-frames. The nuclear weapons convention, like the Chemical Weapons Convention and the BWC, should prohibit all aspects — the use, development, production, testing, stockpiling and transfer of nuclear weapons.

India's recent experience of negotiating in the Conference on Disarmament has not inspired trust, an essential element in disarmament negotiations. Let me recall that three years ago, when a nuclear-weapon State opposed a consensus in the Conference on an issue not relating to its security, members of the Conference respected the right of that country to maintain its position, and even those States directly affected by the decision did not think of subverting the Conference's decision-making procedures. Last month, however, the procedure adopted to bypass India's objections to a Treaty that, in it's view, directly impinged on its security interests, bypassed not India, whose vote in the General Assembly made its position unequivocal, but the Conference itself.

The consensus procedure was adopted to protect the security interests of all Member States. Today, the fear will always remain that if the nuclear-weapon States and those countries whose security interests are guaranteed by arrangements with the nuclear-weapon States so desire that protection in negotiations may not exist. Nonetheless, the Conference on Disarmament is the only truly multilateral forum we have for negotiating disarmament treaties, in which members and observers alike may participate fully in negotiations. Throughout this year, however, despite General Assembly resolution 50/70 P and despite the efforts of the countries of the Group of 21, the Conference on Disarmament was unable to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This failure, it must be recognized, is due to the rigid refusal of some States to discuss nuclear disarmament, an attitude that is stubbornly out of tune with the desires and expectations of the international community. We are therefore supporting a move by a majority of Non-Aligned Movement countries to establish that committee this year — not to negotiate another partial, flawed treaty, but to commence negotiations on a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are determined to keep nuclear disarmament on the international disarmament agenda. This issue must be faced squarely. We are aware of the complexities involved. However, the international community is no longer willing to accept ratiocinations that hide the reality of the reluctance of the nuclear-weapon States to give up a weapon that has not been used for 40 years except as a currency of power. We will not be satisfied with half measures that masquerade as major achievements towards nuclear disarmament. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a case in point. I do not need to repeat our objections to the Treaty — they are, or should be, well known. What appears to be less well known is that we support the stoppage of nuclear-test explosions, but believe that this Treaty, in its present form, is dangerous. It is only a partial ban on nuclear testing. Nuclear testing by sophisticated non-explosive means available to nuclear-weapon States will be permitted to continue by this so-called comprehensive Treaty, and nuclear weapons will continue to be qualitatively developed and upgraded. This was made possible by the refusal of the majority of the nuclear-weapon States to accept a commitment to eliminate their weapons within a reasonable, or indeed any, span of time. As long as these weapons exist, there will be efforts to modernize and upgrade them.

Now we are being sold a fissile material cut-off treaty again as a partial treaty — indeed, it has been described here only as a non-proliferation treaty. But the majority of countries, I am told repeatedly, are already subject to non-proliferation controls — controls that are being refined and tightened in Vienna in the Programme 93+2. At least four of the five nuclear-weapon States have announced unilateral moratoriums on the production of fissile material — not, of course, as a disarmament measure, but because there is so much of it around. So why another non-proliferation treaty? We are not in favour of proliferation, but we are unable to understand the urgency of this proposal.

In fact, there is a strange similarity between the reasoning behind this proposal and that behind the CTBT. When nuclear explosions were no longer necessary to the nuclear-weapon States, they were banned. When there is an overabundance of fissile material for the nuclear-weapon States, they seek to prohibit its production by others. A

prohibition on the production of fissile material that would halt the manufacture of nuclear weapons would be worth striving for; but if this prohibition is to be another partial treaty that permits the nuclear-weapon States to retain the option of utilizing the fissile materials in their stockpiles to continue to manufacture nuclear weapons, it would be one more treaty we can do without. In other words, such an agreement, if it is not to be yet another unequal instrument controlling only horizontal proliferation, can be only one aspect of a nuclear weapons convention that would ban the manufacture and production of nuclear weapons.

On the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, India respects the right of every country to safeguard its security in a manner it deems appropriate. Therefore, we respect the arrangements freely arrived at by countries of a particular region that accord with the guidelines endorsed by the United Nations. We continue to believe, however, that nuclear-weapon-free zones are not the answer to what is clearly a global problem. Nuclear weapons are a global menace. They do not respect territorial or regional boundaries. Partial measures such as nuclear-weapon-free zones only give the impression of progress, which is undermined by the global reach and deployment of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States. Our responses to the various draft resolutions on this issue will be informed by this position.

On 3 September 1996, India deposited our instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We are fully aware that depositing our instrument of ratification brings all of us one step closer to bringing the Convention into force. This could be a momentous event, as the Convention would eradicate a whole class of weapons of mass destruction. But, it could also turn out to be a hollow event, as we note with regret that the two declared possessors of chemical weapons remain outside the Convention. If this situation persists, the integrity and utility of the entire Convention may be called into question. We would have a disarmament treaty, but the possession, development, production and use of chemical weapons would still be allowed for major chemical weapons producers and possessors. Not only is this against the fundamental concept and purpose of the Convention, but it raises major security concerns. We therefore urge all those countries that have not done so, particularly the United States and Russia, to ratify and implement the Convention at the earliest possible time.

India is also a signatory to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and has participated assiduously and constructively in the process of strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. We hope that a strengthened Convention will serve to ensure that this class of weapons is also effectively eradicated. The Ad Hoc Group set up by the Special Conference of the States Parties to the Convention in 1994 has, despite the complex nature of the work, registered significant progress. We look forward to continued, intensified progress in this Group next year. We believe it important that the entire Convention be seen as a subject of compliance measures. In particular, the States parties must fully comply with the obligations laid down not only in article I, but also in articles III and X of the Convention.

The unimpeded transfer and exchange of biotechnology for peaceful purposes will be critical in achieving universal adherence to the Convention and in creating a non-discriminatory and transparent regime. In this context, it needs to be reiterated that India acknowledges the necessity of regulating transfers of dual-use technology in order to ensure that it is used only for peaceful purposes. It is our view, however, that the guidelines for such controls should be multilaterally negotiated, universally applicable and non-discriminatory. Such guidelines, which impinge directly on the socio-economic development of other countries, particularly the developing countries, cannot be arbitrarily decided and implemented by groups of countries operating as closed and exclusive clubs.

The Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, known as the CCW, was successfully completed in Geneva this year with the adoption of a revised Protocol II on landmines and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. The Review Conference conducted its work against the backdrop of the tragic landmine crisis created by irresponsible exports and the indiscriminate use of these weapons. India's efforts in the Review Conference were governed by the belief that the true focus should remain the civilian, whose life and livelihood must be protected from the menace of landmines. It is clear, however, that despite the strengthened Protocol there remain grave areas of concern. The transfer of landmines has not been banned; the use of remotely delivered mines does not attract strict regulations; and the production, use and transfer of "smart" mines may actually have been encouraged by the process.

India supports the move towards a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines, a ban which we feel should be universal and non-discriminatory. While the indiscriminate use of landmines is clearly reprehensible, it needs to be realized that many countries today use these mines as weapons of defence along long, live borders to keep out enemy forces. As we move towards a ban, this function will have to be carried out by some other means and alternative solutions will have to be worked out. In bringing about such a ban, it may be useful to follow a pragmatic approach which addresses the problem in a phased manner. The international community should also, as part of this initiative, address the critical issue of mine clearance and dedicate greater effort and assistance to afflicted areas.

Other conventional weapons must continue to engage the attention of the international community. All efforts must be made to ensure that excessive production, development and transfer of such weapons beyond legitimate security needs are curbed. Restraint and greater transparency in arms transfers could lead to increased confidence and should be encouraged.

The setting up of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to which India has contributed regularly, marks an important step in this direction. This has to be further consolidated so that its full potential as a genuine confidence-building measure can be realized.

We are particularly concerned at the continued transfer of small arms and light weapons, especially where illicit trade in such weapons leads to their diversion to non-State entities. Such illicit traffic in arms can have a disproportionately large negative impact, particularly for the internal security and socio-economic development of affected States. International cooperation in curbing illicit arms traffic and condemning it will be an important factor in combating this phenomenon.

We welcome in this regard the paper entitled "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991", which was adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. We would like to compliment Ambassador Hoffmann for his efforts in achieving this step forward. Endorsement of these guidelines by the United Nations General Assembly would be a valuable first step in this area — a step on which further work could be built.

We look forward to the report of the panel of governmental experts on small arms, which was set up by the Secretary-General. We are considering offering some inputs directly to the panel to contribute to its work.

A number of important issues face us during our deliberations this year and in the years to come. The disarmament and international security agenda for the future can be comprehensively addressed — with regard to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons — through the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We would strongly urge that thorough preparations for this session begin as early as possible next year. However, it bears reiterating that the issue of nuclear disarmament, by its very nature, is an issue which must now receive the full attention and energy of the international community that it deserves.

We must make a concerted effort to start work on a nuclear weapons convention. We must ensure that the Conference on Disarmament is enabled to carry out its mandate and the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament up early next year to consider a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, but always keeping our eye on the objective: the elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): In speaking for the first time in this Committee, it is my pleasure, on behalf of my delegation, to extend to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau our congratulations on your election. I am confident that, under your guidance, the work of this Committee will proceed smoothly to a successful conclusion. You can rest assured of our support in the task ahead.

The past two years have witnessed a number of important developments in the field of disarmament. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and related decisions in May 1995 on strengthening the review process for the Treaty and on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; the adoption of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia; the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons; the adoption in May 1996 by the Disarmament Commission of guidelines for international arms transfers; and, most recently, the adoption in September this year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the General Assembly are all indicators of the resolve of the international community to make progress on disarmament issues, which are so important for the enhancement of international peace and security.

With the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1970, States Parties, constituting the vast majority of States, undertook, in accordance with article VI,

> "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at any early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

The legality of this commitment was only recently confirmed by the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion. We therefore do not agree with the position advanced by some delegations that nuclear disarmament should be left solely to bilateral negotiations. We do not accept the argument that a strategy of linkage in this respect is a strategy of failure; rather, it is a strategy of equality, justice and equity.

The end of the cold war, with its consequent easing of international tension, has created an enabling environment in which we ought to pursue diligently and with the good faith of all Parties our Treaty obligations leading to the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the liquidation of nuclear stockpiles, as well as their means of delivery.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Ghana abides by the word and spirit of the Treaty and in 1995 joined our sister States of the African continent to sign the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Pelindaba Treaty. This Treaty, together with the Treaties of Tlatelolco in Latin America and Rarotonga in the South Pacific, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the Antarctic Treaty, enhances the prospects of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, which we hope will materialize with the cooperation and support of States parties to the various treaties and the nuclear-weapon States, in particular.

In this respect, it is our hope and prayer that conditions in the Middle East and South Asia will, in the near future, generate enough confidence among the States of those regions to enable them freely to conclude regional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, in pursuit of our common objective of nuclear non- proliferation as a first step to the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Our efforts will, however, be to no avail without the cooperation of the nuclear-weapon States. In spite of numerous unanswered questions, we agreed with them in 1995 to extend the NPT indefinitely. Despite the shortcomings of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we again joined them in September this year in the General Assembly to adopt that Treaty, which, like them, we have since signed, as have the vast majority of States.

We took these steps in spite of our reservations because of our desire to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and to create a propitious atmosphere for negotiations to begin without further delay on a treaty for the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound framework.

In the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade (resolution 35/46) adopted by the General Assembly in December 1980, it is noted that, nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is therefore no accident that the international community considers nuclear disarmament as an objective of the highest priority on the disarmament agenda. All States need to contribute to its realization, to save succeeding generations from a nuclear catastrophe, and release energies and resources expended on nuclear armaments for peaceful applications in the service of mankind.

The proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419), submitted to the Conference on Disarmament by its Non-Aligned Movement members and other States, would help achieve this objective. We therefore support it and hope it will also be supported by all members of this Committee.

While weapons of mass destruction rightly deserve the focus of our attention, we are not oblivious to the havoc being wrecked in diverse areas of conflict worldwide through the use of conventional weapons. In recent times, the indiscriminate use of landmines and the proliferation of small arms have caught the attention of the international community and we support efforts aimed at bringing these under control.

In his report of 3 November 1995, the Secretary-General aptly described landmines as

> "a weapon of mass destruction in slow motion, because they indiscriminately kill or maim massive numbers of human beings over a long period of time." *(A/50/701; para. 5)*

We neither manufacture nor stock anti-personnel landmines in Ghana, and we support moratoriums by

concerned countries on their production and use. We also support proposals for the early conclusion of an international agreement on a global ban on the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines and subscribe to the decision of the Organization of African Unity to ban the production, use, stockpiling, sale and export of this category of armaments in the continent in order to protect the well-being of African children and peoples.

I would like to express our profound regret that the Disarmament Commission has, in recent years, failed to make substantive recommendations on subjects of interest approved for its consideration by the General Assembly. In fact, at its 1995 session, it failed to agree on a second substantive agenda item for consideration. If left unchecked, these trends could seriously undermine the Commission's credibility.

In spite of this rather sombre observation, we are encouraged by the fact that the Commission was able, at its 1995 session, to adopt, by consensus, guidelines for international arms transfers, which are contained in its report in document A/51/42. It is our hope that this achievement will rekindle confidence in the work of the Commission and renew the determination of its members to reinvigorate it for the efficient performance of its mandated functions as a universal deliberative organ of the General Assembly.

The difficulties faced by the Disarmament Commission are indicative of growing uncertainties in the whole disarmament agenda of the post-cold-war era at the dawn of a new millennium. The fourth special session on disarmament, called for by the Non-Aligned Movement and other States, should provide the international community with an opportunity to assess and review this agenda, as well as related deliberative and negotiating machinery, to prepare them better for the twenty-first century. It is our hope that the fifty-first session of the General Assembly will arrive at appropriate decisions in pursuit of this objective.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Gabon is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over our work. Your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee is a tribute both to your personal merits and to your country, Belarus. Please be assured of our full cooperation.

We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, the new Secretary of our Committee, Mr. Lin, and the members of the Secretariat for the quality of their service.

To your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, we express all our gratitude for his outstanding chairmanship.

On 12 December 1995, the General Assembly called upon

> "all States participating in the Conference on Disarmament, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to conclude, as a task of the highest priority, a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, so as to enable its signature by the outset of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly." *(resolution 50/65, para. 2)*

After a lengthy and difficult negotiating process within the Conference on Disarmament, the General Assembly indeed adopted on 10 September the final text of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which 126 States have already signed.

The adoption of this important Treaty demonstrates at least one thing: When the context is favourable and political will is duly asserted, it is possible to promote the cause of nuclear disarmament by adhering to a highly specific timetable.

My delegation would like to believe that the impetus of the signing of the CTBT will strengthen the determination of the international community totally to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Of course, nothing is perfect and there are reasons for recalling the inherent shortcomings in the principal agreements on nuclear non-proliferation — be they in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or in the new CTBT — in particular, the lack of a specific commitment by the nuclear Powers to engage in nuclear disarmament, even within the framework of a programme to which they have freely agreed.

However, our approach here is that it is better to have a normative framework with some imperfections than to have nothing at all. In that spirit, my country's Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 7

October of this year. For the authorities of Gabon, that Treaty is not an end in itself but must in fact become one valuable instrument of the overall global system that must be established to achieve general and complete disarmament.

The past half-century has clearly demonstrated that it is possible to maintain international peace and security without recourse to nuclear weapons. That incontrovertible fact highlights not only the importance of instruments and machinery for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons but also, and above all, the need for the ongoing mobilization of the international community in the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Everyone here will agree that the present climate of post-cold-war confidence offers an extraordinary opportunity for accelerating the process of nuclear disarmament with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, which today are indeed onerous and threatening both for those who possess them and for the rest of mankind.

Thus, the strengthening of the NPT, which we shall soon be discussing, should be undertaken on the basis of the relevant provisions of that Treaty's article VI and preamble, as reaffirmed in the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. In this context, the non-nuclear-weapon countries are justified in seeking security guarantees from the nuclear Powers.

That legitimate expectation finally has a legal basis, albeit not a binding one, if we refer to the Advisory Opinion unanimously rendered by the International Court of Justice on 8 July of this year, describing the threat or use of nuclear weapons as contrary to international law and called upon States Members to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. The Opinion of the International Court of Justice is of symbolic value and should rekindle our determination to carry forward the nuclear disarmament process.

Without further delay, negotiation on a treaty halting the production of fissile material for military purposes should be made a priority goal on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament in order to make the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as consistent as possible.

A dynamic trend with positive effects that should be expanded on is the trend towards the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this connection, the signing at Cairo on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty has augmented the denuclearization of the southern hemisphere begun by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Rarotonga and the Treaty of Bangkok.

The initiative of Brazil to have the General Assembly recognize the emergence of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the whole of the southern hemisphere is noteworthy in many ways. However, given the lack of any total denuclearization on the global scale, no region of the world can ultimately be free from nuclear terror.

In the sphere of weapons of mass destruction, we welcome the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, the scope of that Convention will be limited so long as the United States of America and the Russian Federation have not taken the decision to ratify it.

Because of their extreme sensitivity and manifold implications, questions of disarmament can be addressed only from the limited perspective of the security needs of States. Such an orientation is likely to sacrifice the heartfelt desire for a world free from the spectre of nuclear war and of war itself, an ideal that is still, unfortunately, a distant dream.

Indeed, the silence imposed on nuclear weapons has not prevented the proliferation of armed conflicts throughout the world or the massive and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. Hence the urgent need to give efforts to achieve conventional disarmament the same priority accorded to those devoted to nuclear disarmament.

We therefore appeal wholeheartedly for the adoption of concrete measures for conventional disarmament that can provide all nations, and in particular those that are daily facing the horrors of war, with better opportunities to strengthen their security. The delegation of Gabon is prepared to support any resolution on this issue.

In the same vein, we believe that there is a need to arrive at appropriate means to achieve action on the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H that were adopted by the Disarmament Commission. In fact, those guidelines contain principles that can usefully contribute to a better control of international arms transfers and prevent, combat and eradicate illicit arms trafficking, a phenomenon that remains one of the underlying causes for the proliferation of conventional weapons and the aggravation of armed conflicts throughout the world.

In the more specific area of anti-personnel mines, the efforts made by the Canadian Government and supported by 50 countries, including my own, as well as by a great number of non-governmental organizations, deserve the support of us all. It is indeed crucial that we do everything possible to achieve the rapid adoption of a treaty on a total halt to the use, manufacture, stockpiling and transfer of such inhuman weapons.

Before achieving that goal, all States directly concerned in the question of anti-personnel mines could, while respecting the provisions of the Plan of Action of the Ottawa Conference, undertake to observe a moratorium until the adoption of a treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

The achievement of that critical objective must of necessity be accompanied by a concomitant technological and financial commitment by the international community to accelerate the pace of the demining operations already under way and of all those that cannot be implemented because of lack of sufficient resources.

Although it is still crucial to pursue disarmament efforts in all categories of weapons, the best way to avoid having recourse to arms is to avoid waging war, especially through the establishment of confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels.

Strong in that belief and motivated by a profound desire to focus their major resources on the promotion of development activities, on 8 July 1996 the Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa signed, at Yaoundé, Cameroon, a Non-Aggression Pact among the States members of that Committee.

To give that Pact specific content, they decided to establish, under United Nations auspices, a permanent early warning system as a basic instrument for preventive diplomacy in Central Africa. We are convinced that, without that tool, the decisions taken by the Standing Advisory Committee would remain a dead letter. This important subregional initiative requires the support of the international community if it is to consolidate peace and security in one of the most troubled areas of the African continent.

In the pursuit of their efforts to consolidate peace and subregional security, the Central African Heads of State and Government adopted other specific measures, which are set forth in document A/51/274. Here, we wish to thank the United Nations Secretary-General for establishing the trust fund requested by the General Assembly. We should also like to express our gratitude to the Japanese Government for its generous contribution to that fund and appeal to other Member States that can contribute to the realization of the security objectives undertaken in the Central African subregion.

Before concluding my statement, I should like to emphasize that today we have a moral obligation to conclude the disarmament process. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should provide us with an opportunity to draw up the terms of reference for a bold programme for general and complete disarmament. The way in which we meet that challenge will determine our ability to preserve future generations from the scourge of war and to consolidate our shared will to establish a world in which arms no longer have a place.

Mr. Sha Zukang (China)(*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, please allow me to congratulate you, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, on your election to preside over the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. The Chinese delegation is confident that, with your outstanding diplomatic skills and rich experience, you will surely guide the Committee to success. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and to extend our thanks to Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia for the tremendous contribution he made to the work of the First Committee at the last session of the General Assembly.

Our welcome also goes to Mr. Lin Kuo-chung, the new Secretary of the First Committee. The Chinese delegation will, as always, work with other delegations towards the successful conclusion of the Committee's work.

Significant progress has been achieved in the field of international arms control and disarmament since the last session of the General Assembly. Not long ago, the Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In the brief span of a few weeks, 126 countries have already signed the Treaty. The Chemical Weapons Convention is expected to enter into force soon. The States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons have adopted the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons and have amended the Protocol on mines, placing greater restrictions on the use of landmines. Major efforts are being made to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention. Countries in Africa and South-East

Asia have concluded the Pelindaba Treaty and the Treaty of Bangkok, respectively, further expanding the areas covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones.

At the same time, we cannot but recognize that huge nuclear arsenals still exist; that concluded treaties on the reduction of nuclear weapons have yet to come into effect; that some nuclear-weapon States still cling to their policy of nuclear deterrence; that certain countries are actively engaged in research on and development of missile defences and other destabilizing weapon systems; that the Chemical Weapons Convention is still not ratified by the major chemical-weapon- possessing States, and that the large quantities of chemical weapons some countries have abandoned on the territories of others are still posing a constant threat to lives and properties in the countries affected. In these circumstances, much work still needs to be done in the sphere of international arms control and disarmament. We have no reason to relax. Instead, we must give serious thought to the question of how further to promote the process of international arms control and disarmament for the enhancement of international peace, security and stability.

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive of the three categories of weapons of mass destruction. For this reason, nuclear disarmament has long been a question of the highest priority for the entire international community and in particular for the vast number of non-nuclear-weapon States. If we can agree on a complete ban on two types of weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological weapons — and conclude international treaties to that purpose, we have no reason not to be able to agree on the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Chinese Government has always stood for and advocated the early conclusion of an international legal instrument on the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Pending the attainment of that goal, we should and can, in the meantime, take certain steps.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of such steps. For the first time in history, we now have a Treaty that, in a legally binding form, globally bans any nuclear-weapon test explosion and any other nuclear explosion in any environment and at any place. Notwithstanding the various drawbacks of the Treaty, with which the Chinese Government is not completely satisfied, we believe that it contributes to the advancement of the nuclear-disarmament process and to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, thus enhancing international peace and security. Based on this recognition, the Chinese delegation participated throughout the negotiations with a serious and responsible attitude and made important contributions to the final conclusion of the Treaty. It was also based on this recognition that China resolved to become one of the first countries to sign the Treaty. We sincerely hope that the Treaty can enjoy universal adherence and observance as soon as possible.

The abandonment of the policy of nuclear deterrence by the nuclear-weapon States and the further reduction of nuclear weapons by countries with huge nuclear arsenals are other steps that should and can be taken prior to the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear deterrence was the product of the cold war and should now be gone as well. Today, when the cold war is already a thing of the past, the insistence on nuclear deterrence is an expression of cold-war mentality and obviously anachronistic. It will not bring security to any country.

On the issue of nuclear disarmament, we welcome the efforts of the two nuclear super-Powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals. However, those efforts are far from enough. The fact is that they still possess over 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons. Therefore, they are still in duty bound to continue to reduce their nuclear weapons substantially. China, in specific historical circumstances, was forced to develop and possess a small number of nuclear weapons. China has done so purely for its own survival and self-defence. Its nuclear weapons have never posed nor been intended to pose any threat to others. As a nuclear-weapon State, China has always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. It has never evaded its responsibility for nuclear disarmament.

A commitment by all nuclear-weapon States to the non-first use of nuclear weapons, at any time and under any circumstances, and unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the early conclusion of international legal instruments to that effect is yet another step that can and should be taken before the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As one of the five nuclear-weapon States, China has long made such commitments. Today, major changes have taken place in the international situation and in the relations between nuclear-weapon States. We would like to hear from other nuclear-weapon States their underlying reasons and considerations for still insisting on the first use of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon States are duty-bound to

undertake unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. After the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — which means that the vast number of non-nuclear-weapon States have undertaken the legal obligation to forgo forever the option of acquiring nuclear weapons — non-nuclear-weapon States have all the more reason to demand that the nuclear-weapon States undertake such a commitment in a legally binding form. Such a demand is not only reasonable but just.

Those States that have nuclear weapons deployed overseas should withdraw them completely. The nuclear-weapon States can and should do this before the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. The deployment of nuclear weapons in the territories of other countries, for whatever reason and in whatever form, is tantamount to nuclear proliferation. It not only jeopardizes the peace and security of the host countries and the regions they are in but also runs counter to the non-proliferation efforts of the international community, including the relevant nuclear-weapon States themselves, which claim to be the champions of nuclear non-proliferation. These countries should immediately withdraw all their nuclear weapons from other countries. China has never deployed any nuclear weapons outside its territory.

All nuclear-weapon States should commit themselves to supporting the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, respect the nuclear-weapon-free status of such zones and undertake the corresponding obligations. This will not only be conducive to non-proliferation but is also bound to have a positive effect on the process of nuclear disarmament. The Chinese Government has always respected and supported the efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States to establish, through voluntary consultations, nuclear-weapon-free zones in the light of their regions' specific conditions.

In April 1995, the Chinese Government, by way of a national statement, solemnly reiterated its position that at no time and under no circumstances would it be the first to use nuclear weapons, or to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. On this basis, China has positively responded to the initiatives of the non-nuclear-weapon States on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. China has signed and ratified Protocols I and II to both the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty of Rarotonga, and it supports the efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. China is prepared to sign the relevant Protocol to the Treaty, once the States parties to the Treaty solve in an equitable manner the issue of geographic delineation, which is of concern to China.

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that 160 States have signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and that 64 of them have deposited their instruments of ratification. The Convention can be expected to enter into force soon. China is of the view that the key to the realization of the objective and purpose of the Convention lies in its implementation. Existing chemical weapons and their production facilities should be destroyed as soon as possible. States that have abandoned chemical weapons in other countries should earnestly and swiftly resolve the matter in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

The Chinese delegation expresses its appreciation at the progress made since 1993 in the Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We once again call upon all relevant parties to manifest the requisite political will and flexibility in the Preparatory Commission so that the major remaining issues concerning abandoned chemical weapons, challenge inspections and article XI can be properly resolved before the entry into force of the Convention.

To many countries, especially those that have a long land border, landmines remain an effective weapon of self-defence. All States are entitled under the United Nations Charter to use legitimate military means to endure their own security. The Chinese people have not forgotten how landmines wreaked havoc on the invaders (during the eight long years of war against the invasion of Japanese fascists), thus playing an important role in China's triumph in the war. A film depicting that part of history, entitled *Landmine Warfare*, is very popular in China and is loved by all the Chinese people.

At the same time, the Chinese Government and people have always taken seriously humanitarian concerns regarding landmines. We support the humanitarian efforts of the international community aimed at preventing the indiscriminate killing and maiming of innocent civilians by landmines and agree that reasonable and appropriate restrictions should be applied to the use of landmines, in particular anti-personnel landmines. We actively participated in the amendment of the Protocol on Prohibition or Restriction on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, and contributed our share to this process. In April 1996, the Chinese Government solemnly declared that

China would refrain from exporting anti-personnel landmines that do not meet the technical requirements of the amended Protocol, even before its entry into force. We are of the view that in resolving the landmine issue, a proper balance should be struck between humanitarian concerns and the legitimate needs of self-defence of sovereign States. The correct way to prevent landmines from harming innocent people should be to restrict, in an appropriate and reasonable manner, the use of landmines and strictly prohibit their indiscriminate use. The proposal to ban all anti-personnel landmines is unjustified, since it is an assumption based on an over-exaggeration of humanitarian concerns and total disregard for the specific situations of other countries and for the military utility of landmines. We cannot agree with it.

Since the amended Protocol has already includes some important, reasonable and meaningful restrictions on the use of landmines, in particular anti-personnel landmines, our priority task should be the universal adherence to the amended Protocol. At the same time, more attention should be paid and more technical assistance provided to demining activities, so as to enable the people of war-torn countries to return to their homeland and be reintegrated into society as soon as possible. China will seriously, responsibly and comprehensively review the amended Protocol and consider its ratification. We will also continue to provide the necessary assistance to the demining activities of other countries.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, China has earnestly and comprehensively carried out all its obligations under the Convention and has every year submitted to the United Nations the relevant information, as required by the confidence-building measures of the Convention. At present, the States parties to the Convention are working to enhance its effectiveness. In view of the special features of biological weapons and the complicated technical factors involved, efforts should be made to realistically formulate relevant definitions, criteria and lists; clearly delineate activities prohibited and permitted under the Convention; and, on this basis, explore effective and feasible verification measures, together with measures aimed at preventing abuse, protecting commercial secrets and reducing unnecessary interference in normal scientific research and industrial activities. China participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Group in a constructive and responsible manner. We are willing to continue to work closely with other States parties to enhance the effectiveness of the Convention.

At a time when progress has been and is still being made in the field of international arms control and disarmament, some new issues have emerged that are presenting us with serious challenges. These issues, if not dealt with properly and in a timely manner, will not only lead to the loss of gains already achieved in arms control and disarmament but also provoke a new arms race, which no one wants.

The so-called Theatre Missile Defence System (TMD), which certain countries are going all out to develop, will possess the capacity to intercept strategic missiles, thus going beyond the limits imposed by the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and rendering the Treaty virtually meaningless. The development of such a system will constitute an impediment to the further reduction of nuclear weapons by the major nuclear Powers, renew the arms race and destabilize the global strategic equilibrium. It will also inevitably raise concerns among other countries and dampen their enthusiasm to participate in the global process of arms control and disarmament. In addition, the so-called cooperation among certain countries in the development of TMD systems will also lead to the proliferation of advanced missile systems and related technologies, thus posing a threat to regional and even global security and stability. In short, there is nothing to gain and everything to lose from the development of the TMD system. We urge the countries concerned to cease immediately research on, and the development and deployment of, this system. We urge them not to go any further down this dangerous path.

We are faced with both opportunities and challenges in the field of international arms control and disarmament. History has bestowed on us the glorious mission to pursue disarmament for the maintenance of peace and security and for development. China is willing to work with all peace-loving and just countries and people for the attainment of this goal.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): At the outset, Sir, let me add my delegation's warm congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. We wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success.

Total and complete nuclear disarmament is now an international imperative, and general disarmament a challenge that collectively and individually, we must grapple with and resolve quickly in the interest of peace and security in our world.

A major feature of our international system over the centuries has been a balance of power. In the wake of the

Second World War, we saw the world polarized between two super-Powers; each sought in its own way and using its own strategy to maintain an equitable balance of power at worst, or to swing the balance its way at best. The balance of power system became more acute later with the development of nuclear armaments. The balance of conventional power became integrated with the nuclear feature, and each super-Power sought to produce a wider variety of more powerful nuclear weapons to give it additional weight in the balance. To some extent, the conventional balance shifted to a nuclear balance; this became known as the balance of terror.

The situation that prevailed then and that created the elements for a balance of power system based on nuclear armament capability no longer exists. There is now only one super-Power in the global power structure. The complement of nuclear armaments as a circumscription of the traditional balance of power is therefore no longer relevant on our planet today, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons would rid the world of a serious menace to our very existence.

The antagonisms and conflicts that exist in our world are not global in form or scale. In fact, in the last 10 years the antagonisms and conflicts that have taken place in many parts of the world have been internal and regional, and have been contained by the international community without the use of nuclear weaponry. In fact, I dare say that all could have been resolved in a comprehensive and lasting way if there had been a greater will to do so by the super-Power and the other great Powers on the one hand, and the parties to the conflict on the other — and with the United Nations as catalyst.

The antagonisms and conflicts that exist in our world are surfacing more and more within countries themselves, based on internal political, economic and social problems which nonetheless may constitute threats to peace and security. The use of nuclear weapons is not a solution to such conflicts. The vast sums of money spent by nuclear nations to bankroll the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons, if spent internally to resolve internal political, economic and social problems, would enhance development and growth and lessen conflicts and tensions. An energized United Nations system, a Security Council founded on universality, and a system of preventive diplomacy would constitute a valid replacement for nuclear armaments.

My delegation therefore urges the nuclear nations of the world to begin negotiations for an international treaty to halt and prohibit, with acceptable verification, the development and production of all nuclear weapons. This is the second logical step following the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we suggest a realistic time-frame to negotiate and conclude such a treaty.

My delegation further urges the international community to begin negotiations for an international treaty to destroy all stockpiles and arsenals of nuclear weapons, with acceptable verification, and thereby rid the world, once and for all, of nuclear weapons. We suggest that the negotiations for such a Treaty should commence immediately after the adoption of a nuclear weapons non-development, non-production treaty. With such a commitment and action, those countries which did not support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would be encouraged to do so.

It is a disgrace that in today's civilized world, anti-personnel landmines should be part of the armaments of countries. My country wishes to associate itself with the international call immediately to begin negotiations on an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Furthermore, my country recommends that the United Nations consider the formulation and implementation of an international demining programme. Thousands of innocent children are dying tragically as a result of such mines, yet we have committed ourselves to protecting the world's children.

It is a sad reflection on our community of nations that after the concerted efforts pursued and the breakthrough achieved in negotiating the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Convention has still not come into force. The reality is that the Convention is meaningless unless the United States and the Russian Federation ratify it. My country therefore calls on the United States and the Russian Federation to take steps to ratify the Convention as quickly as possible.

Similarly, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, known as the Biological Weapons Convention, is still without teeth. A Review Conference will soon be held, and my country calls upon all States parties to the Convention to give meaning to the Convention by finalizing the arrangements for a verification protocol. We must give the

Convention the means to strengthen compliance, such as on-site inspection.

The production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons constitutes a serious threat to our efforts for total and complete nuclear disarmament. We call on the international community to commence negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile materials.

At the same time, the international community should take immediate steps to prevent and deter illegal trafficking in nuclear materials. Such trafficking is possible and profitable only because there are willing buyers.

We in the South Pacific region are greatly concerned over reported plans afoot by certain unscrupulous nuclear waste dealers to use the Palmyra Islands and certain other sites in the Pacific as permanent disposal facilities for nuclear waste. We consider such proposals to be a threat to our security, and especially to the ecology, food and health of our region.

We must seek to reduce the arsenals of conventional weapons of mass destruction. The heavy trade in arms and the massive national expenditures on arms are generating a new kind of arms race, the results of which we are witnessing in many conflicts in our world.

My country will welcome the convening of another special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Nuclear and general disarmament are sine qua non conditions for lasting peace and security in our world. Let us all act together now to foster total nuclear disarmament and general disarmament.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.8

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

First Committee

8th Meeting
Friday, 18 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the States of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to wish you and the other members of the Bureau every possible success in your work.

At the end of the cold war, mankind had hoped that the international community would pursue its work and redouble its efforts for the containment and peaceful settlement of conflicts and for consistency and balance between the objectives of disarmament, on the one hand, and international peace and security on the other. What we are seeing today, however, is the escalation of civil and regional conflicts and the persistence of foreign occupations, ethnic cleansing, drug trafficking and the illicit traffic in weapons of mass destruction. Contributing to the widening economic and social gap between the developed and the developing States, these phenomena in no way help to further the aspirations of the peoples of the world to a new international economic order that is both equitable and just and that could serve as a solid and reliable foundation for peace, security, stability and development throughout the world.

Member States have an ongoing commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law, which are founded on total and mutual respect for the territorial integrity and political systems of other States and non-interference in their internal affairs; the non-use of force; and the peaceful settlement of conflicts through negotiations. Adherence to these principles requires States fully to honour the primacy of law and the principles of the Charter. Consequently, the international community should not be duped by the declared policies of certain States with respect to peace and security in their region when those same States seek in fact to stockpile prohibited weapons and to create new nuclear reactors that threaten destruction both in times of peace and in times of war. For 40 years the Middle East, particularly the Arab Gulf region, has suffered wars and destructive conflicts, the serious consequences of which have affected peace, security, stability and progress in the economic, social and humanitarian fields.

The United Arab Emirates recently signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and last year signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the context of international efforts to promote the universality of those two Treaties. We have also welcomed the long-term multilateral efforts of all parties to achieve a broad consensus on the question of nuclear disarmament and the international non-proliferation regime. This consensus recently resulted, as the Secretary-General points out in his report, in the accession of the five nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty of Rarotonga establishing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, which made them full parties to that Treaty.

Quite recently, these efforts also led to the conclusion of two regional treaties establishing new nuclear-weapon-

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free zones in South-East Asia and Africa. Thus, the international community has succeeded in turning the entire southern hemisphere into a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

These regional arrangements in the field of transparency in disarmament are indeed positive and constructive steps towards building confidence among States and maintaining international peace and security. We therefore hope that the efforts of the international community to turn the other hemisphere into a nuclear-free zone as well will enjoy every success, particularly in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf region which for some time now have suffered conflicts and wars because Israel possesses prohibited weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. This is at variance with principles of the Middle East peace process, international resolutions and the principle of "land for peace", the aims of which cannot be achieved without the establishment of a perfect political and military balance between all the States of the region.

All the Arab States have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The international community must therefore demand that Israel, the only nuclear-weapon State in the region, also accede to the Treaty, submit all its nuclear installations to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime and take specific steps to create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

The indiscriminate and abusive use of landmines, whose dangers are not necessarily confined to war situations and persist long after conflicts have been settled, is one of the greatest humanitarian problems, sowing such grief and misfortune in our societies. Therefore, we support international efforts to conclude an international convention establishing a total ban on the production, development, stockpiling and use of these weapons. Similarly, the continued existence of stocks of prohibited fissile material for the production of prohibited nuclear weapons and of the illicit traffic in weapons of mass destruction, particularly biological and chemical weapons, remains a source of deep concern and threatens the stability and security of countries and entire regions.

The Disarmament Commission has proved its effectiveness as an active authority in controlling these instruments of destruction and reducing their threat to the economies, security and development of peoples, their impact on the environment and especially their role in spreading ethnic and civilian conflicts when in the possession of the States or other entities involved in such conflicts.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the initiative to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and related security matters before the end of the year 2000 and reaffirms that control of the arms race requires that the mandate of the Disarmament Commission be strengthened, that the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament be expanded so that its objectives also include the establishment of rules governing a State's possession of sophisticated weapons; and that the production, stockpiling and use of, or traffic in, prohibited materials be brought under effective and strict international control.

I take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of the Advisory Opinion recently handed down by the International Court of Justice, which underscores the position of international law with respect to the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in conflicts between States. In the same context, we believe that the role of the Court must also be strengthened and expanded to cover the settlement of ongoing regional conflicts.

Regional and international arms races and military expenditure do not merely threaten international peace and security and the stability of States; they also absorb tremendous amounts of national economic and financial resources, particularly in the developing countries that so sorely need those resources to achieve their aspirations to economic and social development. Despite our understanding that regional conflicts and problems have specific political, social, security and ethnic dimensions, the final settlement of these problems requires political will and the building of confidence between States, particularly neighbouring States, so as to contribute to the establishment of regional zones of peace, security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): Mr. Chairman, please accept my delegation's congratulations on your election. We look forward very much to working closely with you.

This has been a significant year on the disarmament calendar. The international community achieved a long-standing goal with the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) just three weeks ago. Despite the difficulty of the negotiations, we have now established a global norm against nuclear testing. That is a matter of great satisfaction to my delegation and

indeed to the whole South Pacific region. It is a far cry from where we were just one year ago.

New Zealand hopes that the already large number of signatures will be swelled by many more in the weeks to come and that early ratifications will be followed by entry into force without delay. As we work towards entry into force, we would urge all countries to value the Treaty for what it is: both an end to testing in itself and a step on the road to nuclear disarmament. A measured and logical approach to the Preparatory Commission process, which we shall be working on here in New York in coming weeks, will emphasize both these aspects of the CTBT.

The overwhelming desire of humankind for a world free of nuclear weapons is clear. In the past few months, it has been reinforced by the unanimous finding of the International Court of Justice that there is indeed an obligation to pursue and conclude negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament. We hope that this Committee is able to reaffirm that obligation.

But we must also act to fulfil the obligation. Since June this year, we have been pleased to take part in the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament as a full member. The recent announcement that New Zealand intends to appoint a full-time Disarmament Ambassador to the Conference will further enhance our participation.

We are, however, disappointed that so far there has been no agreement on an updated agenda for the Conference on Disarmament which responds to current realities. We hope that, next year, it will be possible to reach a consensus on a comprehensive agenda, including a start to discussions on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, as well as on issues relating to conventional weapons.

While a start to negotiations on a convention on nuclear weapons may not yet be within reach, there are a number of intermediate steps which we can take to move forward. The Canberra Commission rightly identifies bilateral and multilateral measures alike as having a contribution to make and, in this context, we would urge the Russian Federation to ratify START II as soon as possible. That would enable negotiations on a third START treaty to get under way — in our view, preferably including all five nuclear-weapon States. That would be to the benefit of all of us. The alternative to a world without nuclear weapons is not the status quo but increasing dangers of nuclear proliferation.

In 1993, the Assembly reached a consensus that negotiations on a cut-off convention should begin. Last year's Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed that an early conclusion to negotiations on cut-off was an important element in a programme of action aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament. With the CTBT now concluded, it is time for the Conference on Disarmament to take up this issue in earnest. As my colleague from South Africa noted in his statement, New Zealand and South Africa have agreed on the significance of this step.

A convention banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons would be an important move forward and could in turn be complemented by a register of fissile-material stocks and by a verifiable ban on production of new nuclear weapons. In the meantime, New Zealand would see value in the declaration of formal moratoriums on production by all countries producing fissionable material for nuclear weapons.

The NPT principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament also signalled the desire of many States to see security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States given the form of a legally binding instrument. The importance many, including New Zealand, attach to such a legal commitment has been underscored in the past year by the progress made in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. In December 1995, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was opened for signature in Bangkok and signed by 10 countries of the region. In April of this year, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was also opened for signature. In my own region, France, the United Kingdom and the United States signed the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga. France has also followed China and Russia in ratifying the Protocols.

These are developments that New Zealand very much welcomes. Taken together, the four nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties represent the aspirations of nearly two thirds of the membership of this Assembly to be free of nuclear weapons. New Zealand, like a number of other countries party to a nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty, would like to build on that common objective. We have, accordingly, co-sponsored a resolution urging further cooperation between zone members to consolidate efforts that have made over half the world, including most of the southern hemisphere, nuclear free. We take this opportunity to thank Brazil for leading on this initiative and commend the text to the representatives to this Committee.

In addition to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation believes that there are two key processes which can contribute to the achievement of consensus on nuclear disarmament measures. One is the enhanced review of the NPT, a process which should get under way next year. That enhanced review was an important part of the agreement to extend the NPT indefinitely and we need to take it seriously. Practical and constructive outcomes to each of the Preparatory Committees will in turn enable us to build on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agreed in 1995 and move both to full implementation of the provisions of the NPT, including article VI, and to universality.

The other process which New Zealand sees as having potential significance for all aspects of the disarmament agenda is the preparation for and holding of a fourth special session on disarmament. New Zealand hopes that this Committee will be able to reach agreement on a date for a fourth United Nations special session on disarmament so that formal preparations can get underway.

The deposit of the sixty-fifth ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is not far away. The entry into force of this treaty will be a historic achievement. Not only have we outlawed these terrible weapons but, under the Convention, a system will be set up to ensure that parties comply with their obligations. Verification is an essential element in any undertaking to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction; we must have confidence that the obligations of the CWC are in fact being met.

The Biological Weapons Convention, the first treaty to outlaw an entire class of weapons, does not have such a verification system. We place great importance on the process currently under way to develop means of strengthening the Convention in order to correct this deficiency, and we welcome the progress made so far. We look forward to the intensification of Ad Hoc Group negotiations in the coming year. There can be no doubt as to the urgency of this work. The findings of the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq should remind us that the threat is a very real one.

We should not, however, let an understandable preoccupation with the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction prevent us from addressing ways and means to reduce the risk posed by conventional arms. In multilateral disarmament discussions, it could be said that conventional-arms issues are the poor relation. While these weapons do not have the same destructive power as nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, they extract an appalling toll around the world and their proliferation can be destabilizing.

Some regions of the world have made better progress than others in addressing the problem of proliferation. At the international level, we have made a start, albeit tentative. Transparency is an obvious and essential first step along the road to addressing the massive proliferation of conventional arms. In this context, New Zealand has been pleased to see the growing acceptance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a means of promoting transparency and building confidence. We particularly welcome the strong support the Register has received from the Asia-Pacific region.

It is now time to look at the further development of the Register. In this context, the upcoming review of the Register by the group of experts will be important. We would like to see the scope of the Register expanded, with provision made for the inclusion of information on military holdings and procurement through national production. An effort to ensure that the information provided is of high quality would also be welcome. We recognize that progress may not be quick, but it will be important to ensure in the coming years that the Register not only maintains but also builds on the profile that it has achieved.

While the process of reviewing the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons did produce some useful advances, New Zealand attaches considerable importance to the early achievement of a total ban on landmines. We have accordingly co-sponsored the draft resolution put forward by the United States on this issue, which we hope will attract widespread support. We were pleased to have the opportunity in Ottawa, only a fortnight ago, to contribute to thinking on how a total ban might best be achieved.

There is much for the Committee to discuss. The issues are complex and in many cases difficult. But we should not allow that to become an excuse to retreat into hard-line positions.

The international community needs to develop realistic steps towards the goals that have been identified. Let no one doubt New Zealand's commitment to taking those steps.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): First allow me, Sir, to offer you my congratulations on your assumption of the well-earned leadership position of this Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the

Bureau. My delegation pledges its full support for and cooperation with the efforts of the Committee.

May I also associate my delegation with the statements of the two previous speakers — the Permanent Representatives of the United Arab Emirates and of New Zealand — and in particular, with those aspects of the statements emphasizing expansion of arms-control regimes and enhanced verification and transparency mechanisms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is keenly aware of the significance of arms control and the effects that imbalances of military assets have on international peace and security, as well as on confidence and perception between neighbouring States. We understand and appreciate first hand the deliberations of the First Committee, as we have uniquely experienced and continue to experience the effects of war, having endured the massive use of conventional weapons against non-military targets and continuing as we do to live with the horrors of anti-personnel landmines.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring the First Committee up to date on a most relevant issue regarding arms control, particularly in regard to the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. As the Committee may know, under Annex 1-B of the Agreement, the parties have agreed to a regional stabilization arms-control regime. The details of this agreement on subregional arms control were negotiated in Vienna and eventually completed in Florence. This arms-control Agreement is a key part of a two-pronged approach to creating regional military stability that will solidify and secure the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, we may say, in the region.

At this time, the measures agreed to, in the letter, under the Vienna and Florence negotiations and, in the spirit, under the Dayton/Paris Agreement have begun to yield their first results. However, the monitoring mechanisms and the regular and accurate reporting on all aspects of the Agreement are a necessary prerequisite to full implementation of the Agreement. Some recent experiences are giving rise to doubts as to the approaches that some parties may be taking toward this Agreement. It seems that they are not cooperating in good faith in reporting armament levels and are not pursuing the destruction of armaments as required.

Still, we are deeply convinced that it is to the benefit of all in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as to all in the region to approach this segment of the Peace Agreement fully and consistently and to provide transparency while dealing with this most sensitive and important issue.

In this context, we would urge those regional organizations and individual countries which have information on the true armament levels of the parties to be forthcoming with the General Assembly, with the parties and with the international community as a whole regarding this information. Misrepresentations of facts on the ground do not enhance confidence-building goals or regional stability and could in fact have the exact opposite effect. My Government intends to live up fully to its commitments under the Dayton/Paris Agreement's subregional arms-control Agreement and calls upon all other parties to the Agreement to do the same.

My delegation takes particular note of and welcomes the statement of the Irish delegation on behalf of the European Union, which stressed the importance of this Agreement, and I can only reinforce the importance of this Agreement in regional security and, indeed, international stability, peace and security.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also believes that a necessary condition for arms control is transparency. It is for this reason that our delegation will join in the calls for supporting the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. There can be no arms control without transparency and, of course, verification. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this transparency translates into confidence-building, both within the country itself and between neighbouring States. Bosnia and Herzegovina calls upon all its regional neighbours to approach military issues in a transparent manner so as to diminish and eliminate mistrust, misperception and potentially deadly mistakes. In this way, our neighbourhood of south-eastern Europe will be a much more stable and ultimately safer place.

Of course, the second issue of utmost importance to Bosnia and Herzegovina is that of anti-personnel landmines. More than three million of these deadly devices litter our homeland. Their continued presence plays a role in impeding the return of refugees, freedom of movement and economic reconstruction — factors on which the relative peace in my country depends.

My delegation welcomes the convening of the Ottawa Conference and is hopeful that, sooner or later, a similar international conference will be held to sign a comprehensive international agreement banning anti-personnel landmines. In this light, we will do everything within our power to work with those States which are committed to the earliest possible ratification of amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

While we stress that the issue of the production, sale, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines is the core of the problem, we would suggest that an equally important aspect of the mine issue is the location, removal and destruction of existing landmines.

It is in this context that my delegation calls for the sharing of information in mine-removal technology and techniques. Developing and economically poorer countries simply cannot afford the expenditures or the time required to establish research and development mechanisms beginning from scratch and there is no reason that small States should be forced to do so. Too often, they too also cannot afford to retain the foreign, expensive firms with the necessary advanced technology. My delegation would suggest that there should be some consideration given to the establishment of an international database and/or assistance mobilization group on mine-clearance technology and techniques.

We would also like to add that, if we are truly to attack the tragic problems of landmines, technical assistance should be geared towards a "train the trainer" approach. Only in this way can long-term solutions be found for today's real and deadly problems for the people of the world who every day feel the loss and tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines. We see evidence of this approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina and believe that it will, in the longer term, prove itself most effective.

Allow me to underline that in our discussions we must not forget the victims of landmines. Technology and techniques in the fields of rehabilitation and education also need to be shared, both for the individual victims' sake and for the sake of society at large. In this way, the innocent victims of the landmine scourge will be able to function as essential members of society. Education in the dangers and presence of landmines through mine-awareness and other programmes can also serve to prevent further casualties due to landmines.

President Izetbegović, in his address to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, stressed that Bosnia and Herzegovina is fully committed to the principles of international peace and security and believes that international arms control regimes are a necessary and positive tool in making the world a better and safer place. For this reason, we have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and will participate together with the other States signatories in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the full implementation of this important international instrument. We also are supportive of the Chemical Weapons Convention and hope to make a positive contribution to its ratification when we are able to do so. And we pledge the same in regard to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Let me point out once again the utmost importance of the aforementioned agreement in relation to arms control arrangements and transparency in our own region. This is one of the crucial issues for ensuring that the tragic experiences of the past four years will not be repeated again, and that the relative peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in our region will be secured and enhanced.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Our warm congratulations go to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Our felicitations go also to the other members of the Bureau of this important Committee which is charged with heavy responsibilities in the context of the recent developments in the field of disarmament and international security.

We are meeting here this year against the backdrop of a possibly unprecedented momentum in the efforts at disarmament. Progress towards disarmament in the past couple of years in all four categories of weapons — atomic, biological, chemical and conventional — in our assessment, has been significant, and even substantial, if we take into account its far-reaching implications.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, we recognize three distinct developments which have taken place since the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

At the global level, the endorsement of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly and its signature by a majority of Member States, including all major nuclear Powers, is a historic achievement. We do not consider the CTBT as an end in itself, but we recognize it as a significant step towards nuclear non-proliferation.

At the regional level, real progress has been made in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. After Antarctica, the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean and also the South Pacific have become zones free from nuclear weapons. There has been significant progress in establishing nuclear-free zones in Africa and South-East

Asia. These achievements should serve as encouragement particularly for all concerned in the Middle East and South Asia to free those regions of nuclear weapons.

In the bilateral context, the Framework Agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America, and the transfer of nuclear weapons from Belarus and Ukraine to the Russian Federation, are developments with far-reaching implications.

Apart from these, there have also been two other important developments from the global perspective. First is the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, to which reference has been made by the Secretary-General, by you yourself, Mr. Chairman, and by several delegations. We urge all concerned to take due cognizance of the ruling of the world Court and pursue without delay negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects. The second development is the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. In our view, the report merits serious and thorough consideration by the international community on the following grounds: First, it demythifies the perceived strategic and political utility of nuclear weapons. Secondly, it reveals not only the risks of illicit transfers of nuclear weapons or fissile materials to terrorist and sub-national Groups, but also the horrendous reality of the serious risk of nuclear-weapon accidents any time. The indefinite deployment of the weapons, the report underlines, carries a high risk of their ultimate use through accident or inadvertence. We are also told that about 100 accidents were reported between 1945 and 1980 which damaged nuclear weapons and could have caused unintended detonation. A nuclear-weapons accident, needless to say, would not be on a Chernobyl scale. Thirdly, it establishes beyond any controversy the case for a nuclear-free world. And, finally, it recommends pragmatic step-by-step measures to achieve complete global nuclear disarmament. It is therefore our view that the conclusions and recommendations of the Commission should legitimately be taken up for consideration by the entire international community, since these weapons concern the whole of humanity — or rather, threaten its very existence.

As the Committee is aware, the Group of 28 submitted a draft resolution at the Conference on Disarmament, proposing a phased elimination of nuclear weapons. Bangladesh, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, has been involved in the elaboration of the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We have noted with regret differences of views as to the appropriate forum for negotiation of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the report of the Canberra Commission and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice will act as an impetus for building world opinion and facilitating the early start of these negotiations.

Bangladesh is a non-nuclear State party to the NPT, and its commitment to nuclear disarmament goes far beyond the provisions of the CTBT. We therefore supported the endorsement of the Treaty by the General Assembly, and we intend to become a signatory to the Treaty soon. However, as a least-developed country, we are finding it difficult to meet the financial obligations of our signing the CTBT, which reaffirms part of a broader commitment already made by us in the context of the NPT. We have therefore noted with interest the suggestions made by some delegations at the Conference on Disarmament on the question of meeting verification and overhead costs. We also feel that there is a need to take a fresh look at the issue. Options that we envisage could include the following: first, nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, which are already bound by a broader and more stringent regime than that envisaged in the CTBT, and which would therefore be parties to the Treaty only to impart a universal character to the CTBT, could be exempted from any financial obligation. Secondly, least-developed countries could be required to bear only part of the fixed administrative cost of the CTBT, calculated at United Nations rates. No assessment may be applicable either for the standing International Monitoring System or for regular verification costs. Finally, since non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT would not in effect be making any new commitment under the CTBT, they may be considered to have automatically acceded to the CTBT, and may not be counted towards the entry into force of the CTBT. They may be considered parties to the Treaty while outside it, and could therefore be exempted from any cost-sharing burden under the CTBT.

As for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh welcomes the progress made by the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Convention in elaborating a protocol providing for a legally binding effective verification regime.

As for Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it; although we have no chemical-weapons programme or facilities, we are completing the procedures

for its ratification. But, as we all are aware, ratification of the Convention without the major chemical-weapons countries would have little meaning. In the meantime, we hope that the unilateral destruction by the United States of its chemical weapons stockpile would act as encouragement to others to eliminate this abhorrent weapon.

In the field of conventional weapons, and in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the adoption of Protocol II on Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Such Devices and Additional Protocol IV on anti-personnel blinding laser weapons, have been significant achievements. We commend the unilateral decisions taken by a number of countries enforcing moratoriums or bans on the production and export of such weapons and even destruction of existing stockpiles. We join others in expressing thanks to the Government of Canada for convening the international meeting on a global ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Bangladesh is happy to be among the first countries to join in sponsoring a draft resolution proposing the conclusion of an agreement on the global ban of anti-personnel landmines. We would like to underline that negotiation on the proposed agreement should not lose sight of the humanitarian question, that is, of rehabilitation of the victims of landmines, particularly women and children. Saving future generations from the scourge of these treacherous weapons is obviously a humanitarian imperative, but making this noble initiative relevant to millions of victims and their families is perhaps equally important.

In conclusion, I would like to raise two aspects of the question of disarmament and international security, lest the euphoria at our achievements in reducing or eliminating some weapons of mass destruction relegate to second place the overriding objectives of disarmament and international security.

The first aspect is the question of regional disarmament. In today's emerging multi-polar world, regional disarmament presents new challenges. The continued arms race, contingent upon unresolved problems, is a formidable source of threats to security and is draining considerable resources from many countries. It is our belief that while regional confidence-building measures can go a long way, true regional disarmament largely depends on an understanding at the global level and courageous gestures from major Powers. Regional disarmament will not progress unless the legitimate security concerns of other States are adequately addressed.

The second aspect is the link between disarmament and development. It would appear that the decisions of the tenth special session of the General Assembly and of the 1987 International Conference on the question have taken retreat, if not gone totally into oblivion. Bangladesh wants this to be the primary focus of the preparations for a fourth special session devoted to disarmament and of the session itself.

Let me recall in this connection that at the forty-seventh session the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) submitted a report, as requested by the Assembly, on the economic aspects of disarmament. The report contained many conclusions which should be revisited. In quoting the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report* of 1992, the UNIDIR report stated that a three-per-cent annual cut in the military spending of rich and poor countries throughout the 1990s could yield a "peace dividend" of $1.5 trillion for human development by the year 2000. The time is now possibly more than ripe to ask loud and clear the question of where the peace dividend that the end of the cold war had so emphatically promised has gone.

The deliberations in the First Committee should not lose this perspective, for no one would argue that disarmament is an end in itself. It cannot be overemphasized that a more secure world and durable peace can be built only through increased investment in human security. There is value in addressing non-military threats to international peace and security, as a second half-century perspective plan would be too long-term for too many nations of the world, causing uncertainty and agony for millions of men and women.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Küng (International Committee of the Red Cross): A great deal has occurred this year in relation to the regulation of both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Actually, there is no such dual categorization of arms in international humanitarian law, which regulates all weapons in accordance with certain generally applicable rules in order to prevent excessive suffering and destruction. All of the work and comments of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with regard to weapons, whatever their nature from a strategic standpoint, are aimed at ensuring the faithful and impartial application of these rules of international humanitarian law.

On 3 May of this year, the First Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects amended Protocol II, which regulates the use of landmines. The ICRC has had the privilege, in keeping with its statutory mandate, of participating actively in this process.

The ICRC warmly welcomes a number of improvements in the landmines Protocol, in particular its extension to apply in both international and non-international armed conflicts. Unfortunately, the new limitations on the use of anti-personnel mines are both weak and complex, and there is hence a danger that these provisions will not be implemented in the types of conflict in which most recent use has occurred. In particular, poorly trained or poorly equipped forces may be unwilling or unable to abide by a complex set of rules or pay an increased price for self-destructing mines.

The ICRC will promote adherence to the Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This Protocol is intended to restrict the use of mines; it is not meant to encourage States to use mines or to invest in new types of mines. We urge States to go far beyond the provisions of the Protocol and to renounce the production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines.

In March of this year, the ICRC published a study which concluded that the limited military value of anti-personnel mines is far outweighed by their human, economic and social costs. This study has already been distributed by our delegation and more copies are available to anyone who is interested.

Many States have already demonstrated that the end of the landmines crisis need not await a globally negotiated consensus. The Agenda for Action prepared by the Ottawa Conference early this month demonstrates how much can be done towards ending the landmines crisis through moral and political leadership. We welcome the establishment of the Ottawa Group, made up of some 50 States which committed themselves in their final declaration to promoting and implementing, initially on the national and regional levels, the global prohibition and elimination of anti-personnel mines.

In this spirit, 25 States have already renounced or suspended the use of these weapons by their own armed forces, and 11 States are destroying their stockpiles. The Ottawa Group's dynamic agenda for the coming year stresses the urgency of both regional and global efforts, while highlighting the need to combine moves to achieve a ban with increased assistance for mine clearance and for the care and rehabilitation of victims.

We strongly support Canada's initiative in inviting Foreign Ministers to Ottawa in December 1997 to sign a new treaty totally prohibiting anti-personnel mines. We consider this step to be a major breakthrough and encourage States to respond favourably to the Canadian invitation. This initiative properly places the Ottawa Agenda for Action and other international initiatives in the context of urgent efforts to achieve a treaty banning these pernicious weapons. Even if such a treaty does not at first attract universal adherence, as has been the case with most new instruments, it will help create an important new norm.

In the context of the General Assembly the ICRC would advocate the adoption of the strongest possible resolutions, which would, first, unequivocally support a global ban on and the elimination of anti-personnel mines; secondly, call on States to end the production, use and transfer of such arms by a specific date in the very near future; thirdly, encourage the establishment of regional zones free of these weapons, pending the adoption of a global ban; and finally, call for a significant increase in assistance for mine clearance and for the care and rehabilitation of victims.

The ICRC would again like to express its concern at the virtually unrestrained transfer of weapons and, in particular, small arms. Our experience in conflicts around the world is that enormous quantities of light weapons are available to virtually any individual or group which seeks them and that they are all too often used in flagrant violation of the norms of humanitarian law. Implementation of this law is made more difficult by the day as deadly weapons fall into more and more hands. In the coming year the ICRC will undertake a study, requested by the twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, on the relationship between arms availability and violations of humanitarian law. We will also be increasingly involved in dialogue on this issue within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

The ICRC considers the adoption of Additional Protocol IV prohibiting the use of blinding laser weapons to be a landmark achievement of the recent review process of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Not only does it prohibit an abhorrent new means of warfare, but it also means that, for only the second time in history,

the international community has been able to proscribe a potentially inhumane weapon before having to witness its effects on the battlefield.The ICRC encourages States to adhere to this new Protocol at the earliest opportunity and, when they do so, to make a formal declaration of their understanding that the provisions of Protocol IV shall apply in all circumstances. Such a declaration would reflect the understanding reached when the Protocol was adopted that it should apply not only to international armed conflicts.

The rapid advances in the technology required to produce portable blinding laser weapons highlights the need for States meticulously to review the development of new weapons in keeping with their obligation to determine whether their employment would be prohibited by the rules of international humanitarian law. The ICRC, as the guardian of this body of law, will continue to follow such developments. The coming decades will undoubtedly see the emergence of new capabilities for the deployment of arms the nature of which would undermine this law and whose use humanity would come to regret. Additional Protocol IV demonstrates that the international community can act to prevent such developments.

The ICRC welcomes the imminent entry into force of the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention and urges all States which have not yet done so to become parties to it. Likewise, we encourage States to adhere to the Biological Weapons Convention, which, like the Chemical Weapons Convention, strengthens the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which banned the use of chemical and biological weapons. We urge States parties to equip the Biological Weapons Convention, at the upcoming Review Conference, with the most effective possible mechanisms for transparency, monitoring and verification.

Finally, we would like to comment briefly on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. This was the first time that the International Court of Justice analysed at some length international humanitarian law governing the use of weapons. We were pleased to see the reaffirmation of certain rules which the Court defined as "intransgressible" (A/51/218, annex, para. 79), in particular the absolute prohibition on the use of weapons that are by their nature indiscriminate, as well as the prohibition of the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering. We also welcome the Court's emphasis that humanitarian law applies to all weapons without exception, including new ones. In this context we would like to underline that there is no exception to the application of these rules, whatever the circumstances. International humanitarian law is itself the last barrier against the kind of barbarity and horror that can all too easily occur in wartime, and it applies equally to all parties to a conflict at all times.

Turning to the nature of nuclear weapons, we note that, on the basis of the scientific evidence submitted, the Court found that

> "The destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time ... The radiation released by a nuclear explosion would affect health, agriculture, natural resources and demography over a very wide area. Further, the use of nuclear weapons would be a serious danger to future generations." (*ibid., para. 35*)

In the light of this, the ICRC finds it difficult to envisage how a use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the rules of international law. We are convinced that because of their devastating effects no one ever wants to see these weapons used. It is the ICRC's hope that the opinion of the Court will give fresh impetus to the international community's efforts to rid humanity of this terrible threat.

Ms. Tan (Singapore): This is not merely the first time that my delegation has asked to speak at this session. On a more personal note, it is the first time I have attended the First Committee. It is in fact the first time I have attended the General Assembly. Let me therefore not only, Sir, as is customary, congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election, but more personally, crave your indulgence and that of colleagues should my youth and inexperience lead me astray.

It is almost seven years since the Berlin Wall came down. It has been five years since the Soviet Union passed into history. There has been ample time for us to realize that the end of the cold war has not changed the fundamental dynamic of an international system of sovereign States. Even one of my tender years can see all too plainly how the major Powers still stubbornly defend their privileges; how a web of ambition and vested interests still stymie many worthy efforts at international disarmament.

But perhaps I am still young enough to believe in the importance of vision. In any case, I represent a young country. We support the proposal of 28 delegations to the Conference on Disarmament for a programme of action for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, even though in

practice progress in nuclear disarmament has been, at best, piecemeal or partial.

Before I am labelled a pessimist, let me hasten to add that in this vale of tears and tangled web of ambitions that we call the international system perhaps what has been achieved since the end of the cold war is the best that can be achieved. Perhaps the only way forward is through a pragmatic, eclectic and flexible approach that some will inevitably criticize as piecemeal but that others call realistic. It was in this spirit that Singapore supported the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We do not believe that these are inconsequential steps, even though there are clearly many more steps to be taken before our vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world becomes a reality. They are building blocks towards that end.

In drawing attention to the essentially unchanged aspects of the international system, my perhaps-naive intention was to stress the importance of understanding clearly, unsentimentally and without illusions why certain things have occurred, why certain initiatives are possible at a particular point in time but not at an earlier point in time. I am perhaps still of an age to believe that such knowledge is valuable for its own sake.

A case in point is the very important initiative taken by this Committee on landmines. This is undoubtedly a horrendous problem that requires urgent attention. In May of this year Singapore declared a two-year moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines that have no self-destruct or self-neutralizing mechanism. Of course, with some 110 million active landmines in the world, ours is but a very modest step. Nevertheless, it is one made in the true spirit of wanting to lower the risk of civilian deaths and mutilations.

We support and will continue to support initiatives against landmines. Nevertheless, we have never made any secret of our position. It is stated clearly for all to read on pages 15 and 16 of document A/51/313 of 28 August 1996. In that document, while announcing our moratorium, we also stated that we shared the view expressed by several countries last year that it is not practical to have a blanket ban on all types of anti-personnel landmines, since many countries see the need for anti-personnel landmines for legitimate self-defence purposes. Further, attempts to eliminate anti-personnel landmines altogether could be counter-productive if some countries regarded such moves as a threat to their security.

We were therefore extremely gratified to read in document A/C.1/51/7 of 10 October 1996 that one major Power apparently shared our view. That country confirmed its decision to refrain from producing and exporting anti-personnel landmines and to work towards a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. But it also said that it would refrain from the use of anti-personnel landmines except "where such use is absolutely necessary to protect its forces" (*A/C.1/51/7, annex, p. 2*). Exactly.

We were further delighted to read on pages 16 to 18 of document A/51/313 that another major Power, active in pushing for a comprehensive ban on all kinds of mines, argued for an exception for anti-personnel mines "until alternatives become available" (*A/51/313, p. 17*), and that it had begun:

> "a programme of research, procurement and other measures needed to eliminate the requirement for these exceptions and to permit both the United States and our allies to end the reliance on anti-personnel landmines as soon as possible". (*ibid.*)

We are truly grateful for this frank statement that what lies behind the initiative for a global ban on all kinds of landmines is not merely superior virtue but superior technology. The state of weapons research is now such as to make it realistically possible for the technologically advanced countries to contemplate discarding landmines as a weapon of defence without compromising their security. It is perhaps only just that this should be so. It was also, after all, superior technology that made possible the indiscriminate sowing of landmines, for example by air or artillery. This had in many cases made it impossible to comply with the established international law governing mine warfare, thus eventually eroding that regime and promoting the indiscriminate use of landmines.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not against the initiative in this Committee to promote a global ban. Indeed, it has become easier for us and perhaps many other countries to support such an initiative because it is now clear that there will be exceptions in the interim and that technological innovations are under way that would eventually render landmines obsolete as a weapon of self-defence.

But since every country, and not just the major or technologically advanced Powers, has legitimate security interests, I hope that the technologically advanced countries will be generous enough to share their technology so that everyone, and not just a favoured few, can protect their

legitimate security interests without recourse to what is undoubtedly a horrendous and inhumane weapon. This will make a global ban on landmines a truly feasible goal.

In drawing attention to the fact that the cold war was not the only obstacle to global disarmament efforts, it is not my intention to downplay the importance of the end of the cold war. Of course it was a profoundly significant event. In our region, South-East Asia, it was the end of the cold war that enabled the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), after many years of negotiations, to achieve its long-standing goal of a South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. This represents an important step towards, and is a central component of, a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in South-East Asia. These developments would not have been possible in a cold-war context.

During the cold war, the essential security problem facing countries in the region was how to avoid getting entangled in great-Power conflicts. The nuclear-weapon-free zone and the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in South-East Asia were then, perhaps naively, regarded as essentially exclusionary concepts designed to insulate the region from great-Power competition. Needless to say, the great Powers had other ideas. Today, both zones have been redefined as essentially inclusionary steps designed to integrate all Powers as essential components of the regional security architecture. They promote a predictable and constructive pattern of great- and regional-Power relationships to preserve peace, stability and prosperity.

Colleagues will recall that another essential component of the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia, was endorsed by the General Assembly in October 1992. I am pleased to announce that we are at work on an instrument that will allow external Powers to associate themselves with and accede to both the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. When this work is completed, the South-East Asia security foundation for the next century will be in place.

As befitting my years, let me conclude on another optimistic note. My delegation welcomes and supports the initiative of Brazil to promote a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. In drawing explicit linkages between nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin America, the South Pacific and South-East Asia, that initiative seems to us to be a good example of the kind of pragmatic but visionary building-block approach that my delegation believes is the only way forward. We urge all colleagues to join us in supporting it.

Mr. Naranjo Villalobos (Costa Rica)(*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Costa Rica is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I should like to say that we are convinced that under your skilful guidance the Committee will successfully discharge its mandate. To that end, you may count on the cooperation of Costa Rica.

I should like to begin by referring to my own country. Costa Rica follows a policy of disarmament of its own free will. Almost 50 years ago, under the illustrious leadership of then-President José Figueres Ferrer, Costa Rica abolished its armed forces and decided to devote the resources previously allocated to the military budget to the development process and, most fundamentally, to investing in our society.

There can be no doubt that Costa Rican history is rather atypical; in no way do we expect it to be duplicated throughout the world, as we understand and accept the heterogeneity of various political models. I would nonetheless like to point out that political democracy has been consolidated in Costa Rica through economic development and social well-being. The elimination of our armed forces and the demilitarization of our society have fostered a broad, pluralistic, representative system in the form of a democratic and social state of law, which is the legal structure representing the will for peace, conciliation and harmonious coexistence Costa Ricans have chosen.

It is not by chance that one of Costa Rica's fundamental foreign policy goals is that of disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. Our experience has convinced us that organized international society should also devote its efforts to achieving this noble goal.

The world stands at the threshold of the twenty-first century, which will be an age of great technological progress. However, the advances that lie ahead will make sense only in the context of peace among all nations and with a view to the development and progress of humanity. Disarmament is imperative for securing this new world.

This is why we view with interest and enthusiasm the progress that has been made in this area over the last year. In the course of the past 12 months, several events have occurred that fill us with enthusiasm and hope, because they prove beyond question that the majority of this

Organization's Member States favour nuclear and conventional disarmament.

Costa Rica participated in the work that culminated in the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This action taken by the international community not only sent a clear message, but also provided impetus for subsequent actions that at first seemed implausible but today are realities. But we cannot become complacent; the Member States of the United Nations must break the bonds of the past. Four years from the new millennium, there must be a new attitude in support of absolute, unconditional nuclear disarmament. In this regard, one can never repeat too often that nuclear weapons are incompatible with the true spirit of humanity.

Without nuclear disarmament, our great progress and the great leap forward to the third millennium lose all meaning. The twenty-first century must be a century of comprehensive peace. This is why Costa Rica believes that the time has come to initiate negotiations within the United Nations on the total and unconditional abolition of nuclear weapons. In this connection, we would like to give our full and unconditional support to Malaysia's initiative in the General Assembly.

For my country, 8 July of this year was a special day: on that day the International Court of Justice handed down its Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Costa Rica appeared twice before the Court to express its views on this matter. On one of those occasions, the President of the Republic, José María Figueres Olsen, spoke resoundingly of Costa Ricans' opposition to nuclear weapons. Although we felt that the Court might have gone farther, the opinion filled us with satisfaction, as its content clearly delegitimizes the use of nuclear weapons.

Costa Rica agrees with His Excellency the President of the Court that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons has a destabilizing effect on international humanitarian law. Above all, Costa Rica endorses the need for the Members of the United Nations to initiate negotiations in good faith, on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects and to establish strict and effective international controls on nuclear weapons.

In this connection, since it was the General Assembly that requested the Court's opinion, Costa Rica urges all Member States to support the draft resolution on follow-up to that Advisory Opinion, which has been distributed to delegations.

Costa Rica would also like to emphasize the great significance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has already been signed by more than two thirds of Member States, and would like to add its voice to those in the general debate and in this Committee that have asked the countries that have yet to sign the Treaty to do so as soon as possible. My country believes that, in accordance with international law and in compliance with the majority will of the international community, all States should modify their behaviour and refrain from any actions that would run counter to the content of the Treaty, particularly during this period prior to its entry into force.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must be observed in good faith. Costa Rica will pay close attention in this regard and believes that verification and control instruments should become operational as soon as possible. As a symbolic contribution, the Costa Rican seismological stations will participate in this noble international endeavour.

Costa Rica would like to reaffirm its unconditional support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America, and takes great pleasure in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, through the Treaty of Bangkok, and in Africa, through the Treaty of Pelindaba. Thus has a vast area of the world been freed from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

For these reasons, Costa Rica supports the creation of a broad region called "The nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas" on the basis of a proposal for resolutions put forward by Brazil, which should include a total ban on the transport and transfer of nuclear materials for bellicose purposes and of atomic waste.

As regards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Costa Rica believes it would be highly significant if an agreement could be reached between the States of the region so that the Holy Land, where Armageddon could be unleashed, can also be free from the threat of nuclear destruction. Costa Rica calls upon the States of the Middle East to do their utmost to protect that land of profound, sacred significance for humanity.

In the area of conventional disarmament, Costa Rica attaches highest priority to the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. My country has deposited

the instrument of ratification of that Convention and plans to participate actively in the next session, to be held in November. In this connection, Costa Rica invites those States that have not already done so to conclude the process of ratification and pronounces itself in favour of the broadest possible international participation in the November conference, and especially in favour of significant opportunities for non-governmental organizations to participate actively.

Insofar as biological weapons are concerned, Costa Rica supports the adoption of a protocol strengthening the Convention on biological and toxin weapons and providing the international community with appropriate verification machinery.

Costa Rica, being situated in Central America and having suffered the effects of the wars of the last decade, is deeply concerned about anti-personnel landmines. My country is aware of the destructive effects of these weapons on innocent and defenceless individuals, who lose their lives while trying to cultivate their lands or are mutilated when they step on a mine.

There are more than 100 million active anti-personnel landmines planted throughout the world, most of which are in developing countries. There can be no intermediate positions on this issue. While we supported draft resolutions of a declarative nature on this issue in past years, we believe the time has come for the United Nations to take clear and forceful decisions on this matter.

Those who have favoured and supported the planting of anti-personnel mines in the past must now assume their responsibility and participate actively in the demining processes under way. Costa Rica has received several texts of draft resolutions on this issue. However, we are surprised at the lack of clear identifications of compelling actions that would demonstrate a universal will to confront and resolve this serious problem.

Turning to another matter, Costa Rica is greatly concerned at the growth in the international arms trade. Six years ago we sang the praises of the bright future of peace dividends. The cold war had ended; low-intensity conflicts had lessened. Nevertheless, international arms trade increases, making it difficult for developing countries to allocate more of their resources to the establishment of justice, well-being and equity. My country rejects that sad reality and wishes to draw the attention of the Member States of this Organization to the situation.

The achievement of complete and unconditional disarmament is the obligation of all. For this reason, Costa Rica offers its full support for the proposal submitted by Ireland and supported by many Member States, with a view to increasing the number of States participating in the Conference on Disarmament. Today my country wishes to express its clear interest in participating in the enormous tasks carried out by that forum.

In the course of the proceedings of the First Committee, Costa Rica will express its opinion on the various items on the agenda. However, I considered this an appropriate occasion to express our views on certain general aspects. I have done so from a positive perspective, as is appropriate for a small unilaterally disarmed country, that fully appreciates the contributions this Committee has made and will continue to make.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.